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High School Racial Confrontation. A Study of the White Plains, New York, Student Boycott. Student Unrest and Changing Student-Staff Relationships in the White Plains Public Schools, September, 1967 to December, 1968.

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This case study examines a racial confrontation in the high school of White Plains, New York. The study includes a chronology of the White Plains incident, a report of the community background, discussion of various hypotheses concerning the reasons for the incident (social class factors, youths testing new roles, and breakdown of authority), facts about the school, discussion of the idealogical influences, an analysis of how the class boycott was handled, and a description of innovations resulting from the incident. Recommendations call for (1) making greater effort to have the curriculum represent all ethnic groups, (2) hiring more Negro staff, (3) approaching student government in new ways, (4) guarding against becoming rigid and formal in dealing with school tensions, (5) seeking more involvement of pupils and community in discipline, and (6) reexamining grouping practices. (TT)

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HIGH SCHOOL RACIAL CONFRONTATION

A Study of the White Plains, New York, Student Boycott

Student Unrest and Changing Student-Staff Relationships in the White Plains Public Schools, September, 1967 to December, 1968

EA 002 133

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DIRECTED BY

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FOR

The White Plains Board of Education

***With Support of the Danforth Foundation
and the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights***

Joint Study Commission

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February 4, 1969

The depth study of White Plains was stimulated by the Commission's six-city study of New Haven, Connecticut; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Washington, D.C.; Muncie, Indiana; East Los Angeles, California, and White Plains.

The Commission will issue its own findings on all six cities in an official report covering the six projects, later this year.

It should be stressed that, while the investigation in White Plains was undertaken jointly by the several sponsors, the Commission has not imposed any restraints upon the conclusions of the joint study team which Dr. Dodson headed. The joint study team and the Commission have been free to draw conclusions from the evidence examined. Thus, the findings and recommendations in this report are those of the joint team headed by Dr. Dodson.

– Elias Blake
Washington, D.C.
Director of the United States
Commission on Civil Rights'
six-city study of racial unrest

Foreword

It takes a mature school system and a mature community to allow itself to be studied through a crisis era, as White Plains has done. There are no norms against which to compare the schools with others, hence there is no reason to suppose the system has done any worse than others who faced comparable issues. In fact, it is the belief of this investigator that the White Plains record is better, by far, than the average. What the study has revealed is not alone how far White Plains has yet to go, but, as well, how far all American education has to go on the issue of race.

Undoubtedly, some will try to make political capital of the report. It would be a mistake if the community were to allow this to happen. Before problems can be dealt with effectively, the community has to understand what these problems are. A school administration cannot feel free to interpret problems to the community if every weakness revealed is used to discredit the fine things the schools are doing.

I was interested in leading this study primarily because I believed White Plains did have a *good* school system. I still believe it is among the best in the nation. The issue before the community is not the solution of a unique problem. It is, instead, how you lead the nation in the solution of this general problem.

I wish to express deep appreciation to my colleagues, Mr. Robert Mayhawk, Miss June Shagaloff, Dr. Elias Blake and Dr. Irving Ratchick for their help. Especial appreciation should go to the more than 60 people with whom we talked, a large portion of whom were school staff. The study could not have been done without the great enthusiasm Dr. Carroll Johnson had for it, and the unstinting efforts of Dr. Johnson, JoAn Booth and Dr. William Hughes.

As with all such efforts, the investigator makes his report and leaves its implementation in the hands of a concerned community and school system. His has been the easier part. Your part, in White Plains, will require heroic efforts over years of time. If the investigator had not possessed confidence that you had the will and the disposition to follow through, he would not have been interested in working with you on it.

– DAN W. DODSON
Director,
Center for Human Relations and Community Studies,
New York University

Some Insights: A Preface

The chronology of a study provides for an orderly arrangement of events in the sequence in which they occurred. The most difficult task faced by a commission in developing the chronology is that of trying to recapture the tone and atmosphere in which the events initially took place.

Alfred Korzybski, father of general semantics, addressed himself to the disparity between emotions and the labels one gives to them. Mr. Korzybski said that the *word* was not the *thing*. The depth of this statement comes to the fore when individuals attempt to express strong feelings. Anger, rage, conflict and fear are relative terms in that they serve each of us in different ways and have for each his own, personal connotations.

Throughout the White Plains disturbance turbulent emotions were evoked. Teachers, students and observers shared in the recall:

> **. . ."Students were both psychologically and physiologically affected. I had students call me from home and say that they had 'thrown up' and were 'sick to their stomachs'," said one teacher.**
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> **. . ."The atmosphere on the lawn in front of the school seemed tense," said one of the local newspaper reporters, "but some kind of dialogue seemed to be going on, and after everything was said and done, it didn't develop into anything worse — which it could have. It ended up being constructive because of the way it turned out."**
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> **. . ."One of the starkest contrasts occurred on April 2nd. Groups of students on the lawn were beginning to engage in some kind of dialogue despite prevalent high tension. Inside the building, however, a white girl said something which offended a Negro girl and several students turned toward the offender, yelling, 'Kill, kill, kill . . .' as a swelling crowd pressed the white girl against the glass wall of the corridor," reported an administrator.**
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> **. . ."Violence was avoided in one instance," said a custodian. "At one point, a group of white youths lined up on one side of a long corridor, arms folded, glowering, while a group of black youths stood glowering, their arms also folded, on the other side of the hall. It was a tense, eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation. Administrators and custodians quickly moved into the narrow space between the two groups, interposing their bodies as buffers to prevent an outbreak of overt hostility. Both groups were finally persuaded to disperse."**
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> **. . ."I was extremely frightened," said one teacher. "I went home each evening in fear that the next day would be worse. I was confused, as I knew many of my co-workers were. Rumors were rampant and when I was asked questions by perplexed students, I became defensive because I was not knowledgeable as to what was going on or what decisions were being made."**
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> **. . ."Black students were milling around out in front of the school on the lawn when I arrived," said one of the black observers from a local agency. "School administrators and several community leaders were also present, but they seemed suspended and indecisive. The three student leaders were jockeying for position and had been unable up to that point to coalesce. Small pockets of students were formed on the periphery of the main body. Teachers inside the school were trying to move the onlooking students who were gazing curiously out of the windows as they came into the corridors on their way to change classes. 'I'll kill that reporter if he calls me a nigger,' a student passing by remarked to his friend. (It seemed that an out-of-town reporter had made a derogatory reference to some students who had**

> **threatened to destroy his camera if he photographed them.) One's stream of consciousness absorbed a multiplicity of things. However, everything seemed to indicate confusion and disruption without violence."**

It was also recalled that the Superintendent of Schools had been booed and heckled by students in the April 2nd student assembly.

Teachers shared anecdotes for illustrative purposes. A case in point was the story of how many black students, feeling pressured by their peers to join the demonstration, asked their teachers for advice. One such student, after being advised that the decision would have to be a personal one, thanked her teacher, drew a heart with initials in it on the blackboard, and walked out of the school to join the other demonstrators.

Emotions swell. The newness of a situation combined with the unforeseen and the uncertainty of it all can elicit withdrawal and aggression from both the initiator and the victim. Neither teacher nor student escaped from being affected by what happened during the demonstrations. The impact of the experience varied with the individual and, to a measurable degree, helped shape the individual's perception of what went on around him.

The commission can offer no kaleidoscopic recapitulation of what truly happened but, through interviews and actual reports, a reasonable account can be given. The "hot experience" differs somewhat from the "cold analysis" which comes after the time lag. However, with this background of reported events, a context for reviewing the incident is developed.

— Robert Mayhawk
White Plains, N. Y.

We are indebted to Dr. James E. Allen, Jr., Commissioner of Education for the State of New York, who secured funds from the Danforth Foundation in order to make this depth investigation possible.

The White Plains Board of Education has given its support, without reservation to a thorough and objective examination of the circumstances surrounding last spring's student unrest in our school system, with a view to improving our own program and, hopefully, to establishing some guidelines which might help other school systems faced with similar challenges.

Members of the Board are: Andrew R. Stevenson, President; Thomas D. Nast, Vice President; John F. Shanklin, William Q. Keenan and Mrs. Walter Arnold.

We are deeply grateful to Dr. Dan W. Dodson and members of the joint study commission for the scholarly and perceptive approach they have taken, and for the many hours of exacting work which went into this important undertaking.

— Carroll F. Johnson
Superintendent of Schools

—I—

INTRODUCTION

On Tuesday, March 26, 1968, the school system of White Plains, N. Y., experienced the beginning of a racial disturbance which lasted intermittently through the next two weeks.

This study of that incident is sponsored by the United States Commission on Civil Rights with the assistance of the New York State Education Department and the financial support of the Danforth Foundation, which contributed a supplementary grant in order to enlarge the scope of the investigation. It is one of six such studies under Civil Rights Commission sponsorship, but none of the others is perceived to be as comprehensive, nor do they involve this type of joint sponsorship.

The White Plains study was conducted for the Civil Rights Commission by the Institute for Services to Education, Washington, D.C., and by Professor Dan W. Dodson of New York University, with the assistance of one independent consultant, one consultant who is associated with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and one who is associated with the New York State Education Department.

The purpose of the study is to determine, insofar as possible, the reasons for the type of student disturbances which have been occurring on the campuses of secondary schools, disturbances of which those in the six cities under study are but a few among many; to examine the way such disturbances were handled and their outcomes in terms of changes in the school systems; and, above all, hopefully, to enable the Commission's study teams to make recommendations concerning operation of high schools which must serve multi-racial student bodies.

—II—

CHRONOLOGY OF THE INCIDENT

At the beginning of the fourth period of the school day at White Plains High School – that is, the first lunch period – on Tuesday, March 26, 1968, Assistant Principals Gerald Ivers and Tercizio Binotto observed a group of students "ganging" in the hall. They followed them as they moved to the cafeteria of North House, where they held a caucus. From there, the students went through the transverse corridor to South House, which parallels the North House wing, and thence onto the lawn in front of the H-shaped high school.

The original dozen were soon joined by more than 100 others. Almost all were Negro. When Principal Manson Donaghey saw the group forming and enlarging, he shortened the lunch period. Instead of going in for classes, however, the students stayed on the lawn. They were then joined by still others who had been dismissed for the fifth period, the second lunch period.

Because of a disturbance the day before at a neighboring school, Woodlands High School in Greenburgh School District 8,[1] a meeting of secondary school principals had been canceled on the morning of the 26th. The supervisory staff of the White Plains School System was deployed among the four secondary school buildings. Dr. Carroll F. Johnson, Superintendent of Schools, went to the high school; Assistant Superintendent James T. Johnson went to East View Junior High School; Dr. William Hughes, the Superintendent's Administrative Assistant, went to Battle Hill Junior High School, and Dr. Arthur Antin, Assistant Superintendent, went to Highlands Junior High School. Hence, the Superintendent of Schools was on the premises when the incident at White Plains High School erupted.

Some significance is given to the fact that before the end of the first lunch period a number of adult visitors arrived at the school. They included Mrs. Inez Singletary, Director of the Community Action Program's Ferris Avenue Neighborhood Center, (Subsequently she has become CAP Executive Director in White Plains.); Mrs. James Newton, President of the East View Elementary School PTA and an employee of CAP, and Mr. Offie Wortham, CAP Community Organizer and Director of CAP's Neighborhood House on Fisher Avenue. These adults are Negro. (For purposes of distinguishing the various roles played by students, staff members and adults not connected with the staff, the race of various persons will be identified when it appears relevant.)

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[1] It should be noted that White Plains serves as the center, or hub, for Negro neighborhoods in several surrounding areas. These include Greenburgh and Elmsford. There is a close network of communication among the youths of these areas.

Role of Adult Visitors

The adult visitors observed what was happening in the halls and on the lawn, but had little to say, at first. It was later understood that they came to the school after a girl student, a member of the Ferris Avenue Center (CAP) had telephoned Mr. Wortham at the CAP office and told him of the gathering. This is the explanation which was later given by Mrs. Sioux Taylor, then Executive Director of CAP. After receiving the call, CAP officials conferred among themselves and decided that several of them should go to the high school "to be on hand".

Efforts by high school staff to get the students on the lawn to go to fifth period classes failed for the most part. Several white youths, identified as being mostly from the Silver Lake area of the city, were averted from going on the lawn to "start something" by teachers inside the building. These teachers tried to keep traffic moving in the halls and keep the white youths away from windows overlooking the front lawn.

Toward the end of the fifth period (second and final lunch period), several of the leaders of the group on the lawn appeared at the principal's office and asked to talk to him and the superintendent.

The principal, the superintendent and two other staff members, Assistant Principal Tercizio Binotto and South House Director Daniel A. Woodard, then met with a student group which included Henry Johnson, Barry Bennett, James Myers, John Fox, Glenn Rogers, Charlie Morgan, and Otis Moore. All of these students except Fox are Negro. All of the administrators involved in the meeting are white, except for Mr. Woodard, who is Negro.

The students charged that not enough was being done to "bring forth the black self-image". They denounced the lack of emphasis in the school system's curriculum on Negro history and contributions and, becoming more heated in their allegations, charged that some staff members of the high school were racists.

While the meeting was in progress, a police car inadvertently arrived on the driveway in front of the school. The students, seeing the car from the office windows, accused the administration of calling in "the Man"

(While the superintendent had alerted the police, there had been an agreement that they would not be brought onto the campus, but instead that plainclothesmen would be stationed nearby in case they should be needed. The arrival of the police car had been inadvertent.)

Mr. Binotto went outside and asked the policeman driving the car to leave the campus. He immediately did so. This averted a threatened walk-out from the office by the student leaders.

From the seven students in the office, three emerged as major spokesmen for the group and subsequently were designated to negotiate with the administration in its efforts to "cool" the disturbance. They were John Fox, James Myers and Glenn Rogers. The staff felt that, in the beginning, Rogers played more of a pacification role, but later felt that he had changed his stance. Eventually, Glenn Rogers said to the administrators, "Look! Can we take them off the lawn and into the auditorium?"

Meanwhile, on the lawn, groups of the Negro students were trying to get others of their race to join in the demonstration, saying black students had a responsibility to "come out and join them". Sixth period had arrived, both lunch periods were over and it was obvious that none of the 150 students on the lawn should be there. Permission was given the student leaders for a meeting in the auditorium. Once there, Fox, Myers and Rogers acted as spokesmen for the demonstration movement. After some speechmaking, they left the auditorium and went back to the principal's office where they started negotiations with the administration.

The rest of the demonstrators remained in the auditorium. Mr. Wortham led the group in singing "We Shall Overcome (Now)" and Mrs. Singletary, calling for them to enumerate their grievances, presided over an ensuing discussion.

A point worth mentioning is that when the group of some 150 moved from the lawn to the auditorium, a walk which requires traveling almost the full length of one side of the building, no property was damaged — even though the group went through the parking lot among staff automobiles and passed numerous vulnerable points, such as large expanses of window wall.

Student Demands

While the singing of freedom songs and the recital of grievances continued in the auditorium that afternoon, the three student leaders meeting in the principal's office with administrators produced a list of demands. These were:

1. Black history course at the high school level. 2. Assemblies every other week featuring black speakers, with all students required to attend. 3. Instant implementation of Negro representation on the senior prom committee. (Dis-

cussion revealed that there had been Negro students on the committee and this demand was then abandoned.) 4. More Negro books in the library. 5. Negroes to be employed in the cafeterias, since none are now employed there. 6. More Negro teachers and guidance counselors. (The charge that guidance counselors were slow to move on any complaint was reiterated.) 7. Humanities class should be open to all. 8. White teacher attitudes must change. All teachers should be required to attend summer courses in human relations. 9. The school must teach about blacks in all phases of the curriculum.

The administrators indicated that there could be elective seminars on Negro history and culture at lunchtime or after school, but took the position that it would not be possible to have compulsory all-student assemblies with Negro speakers selected by the black students or compulsory human relations courses for all teachers during the coming summer. They informed the youngsters that plans had already been made to revise the K-12 social studies curriculum and said it would probably be possible to give them more information toward the end of April, April 22, as to the time-table for this revision and what kinds of faculty task forces would be working on this project during the summer. They agreed that there should be Negro students in the Humanities course and in the Afro-Asian (Social Studies V) course.

The student leaders returned to the auditorium and reported on this discussion. The assembly ended as it was about time for school to end. School was then dismissed at the regular hour without further incident. In summary, it can be said that, while tension was high, there was no actual violence on the first day of the disturbance.

In addition to the developments at White Plains High School that day, there was one episode at the Highlands Junior High School. As the bus unloaded that morning, a group of Negro youngsters ran through the hall yelling, "Black Power." At the two other junior high schools there was little evidence of disruption, although wild rumors ran through all three junior highs, indicating a considerable tension.

Wednesday, March 27, saw a considerable repetition of the activities which had occurred during the first day's disturbance at White Plains High School. Black students arrived Wednesday morning carrying "Black Power" signs. Some white students arrived carrying "White Power" signs. Students, black and white, gathered in knots on the front lawn. When the opening bell rang, however, the white students went inside to class. But Negro students, again numbering about 150, gathered on the lawn and remained there.

Again, a number of adult visitors came to the campus. They were: Jack Marash, Executive Secretary of the White Plains Human Rights Commission;

Arthur Kellman, Human Rights Commissioner; Mrs. Sioux Taylor, then Executive Director of CAP; Dr. William Griffin, a dentist; Merrill Folsom, then Westchester County correspondent for *The New York Times* and Mr. Wortham and Mrs. Singletary, who had come to the school the day before. Messrs. Marash, Kellman and Folsom are white. Mrs. Taylor and Dr. Griffin are Negro.

After gathering on the lawn for a while, the student group proceeded to the auditorium, where they remained, singing freedom songs, chanting and making statements until about lunchtime, 11:15 a.m. During the lunch periods, some drifted away from the auditorium and some disrupted cafeteria lines but there were otherwise no incidents. During the lunch periods, the student leaders were again meeting with the administrators, further discussing the demands they had presented the day before. It was agreed that the administration would make a progress report on the proposed seminars and the curriculum revision on Tuesday, April 2. At the opening of school that day, the principal had addressed the student body over the public address system. He told them that legitimate student requests would be honored, but stressed the necessity of observing school regulations. In their talk that day with administrators, the three student leaders had appeared to see the need for re-establishing normal standards of conduct at the school. Some pupils, white and Negro, did take advantage of the general situation, however, to leave school early or to cut classes.

Adult Reaction

On the evening of March 28, the principal, Mr. Donaghey, met with a group of parents in the Winbrook Public Housing Project. These adults voiced a great deal of dissatisfaction over the operation of the White Plains schools. Toward the end of the meeting the student leaders Fox and Myers arrived and took over. They berated the parents and all adults present for lack of action in the past, and indicated that they, as students, had had to "take over the movement".

This particular meeting was also attended by several Negro faculty members from the school system. Some of the Negro adults at the meeting made it clear that they viewed these Negro staff members as being "with the establishment" rather than "with the black community". The tone of the meeting was extremely vituperative toward Mr. Donaghey, the schools and the Negro faculty members.

On Monday, April 1, the high school principal issued this statement to all students:

To: All Students
From: Manson A. Donaghey, Principal

On Tuesday of last week, after a group of students had assembled on the lawn at White Plains High School, representatives of that group expressed to the school administration several particular concerns, which, they explained, had led to their demonstration.

One of these concerns was the failure of textbooks and school curricula, for some 200 years, to give balanced and due attention to the contribution which Negro citizens have made to the culture, politics, science and literature of the nation and the world.

Other concerns included the need for more representation of Negro students in some of the activities of our high school.

These are legitimate concerns. Accordingly, we will take certain steps, among them the following:

1) During the remainder of the school year, we will expand our presentations and activities to include Negroes in the community and from the metropolitan area. We are already working to secure Negro speakers and artists for regular assemblies, and we are also discussing with the student representatives the establishment of seminars which would feature speakers, films and other interesting and relevant material, including possible field trips.

2) It is our intent to have a task force of teachers work this summer on the K-12 social studies curriculum with a view to achieving balanced representation of the contributions of all ethnic and racial groups, including Negroes. We will have a final answer on Tuesday, April 22.

3) There will be a follow-up meeting on Thursday, April 4, of the school administration and the student representatives to discuss progress in all areas.

4) A committee of teachers will be appointed immediately by the high school principal to examine all extracurricular activities, including the prom committee, to find ways of integrating activities to the greatest extent possible.

I believe it should be known to all students that many of the concerns expressed by this group of students have also been the concern of teachers and the administration for some time. Last year, for example, White Plains Teachers Association created an Equal Educational Opportunities Committee, which has been working in this general area. Earlier this spring, the Equal Educational Opportunities Committee asked that human relations sensitivity training courses be provided for the faculty.

The districtwide Curriculum Council has been developing, since February, plans for a summer task force to work on the social studies curriculum with a view to placing more emphasis on the contributions of Negro citizens. The Council has also been planning work in the area of Negro literature.

Legitimate concerns of students are shared by faculty and administration. Now it is time that we return to our normal schedule so that we may get on with the important work before us during the rest of the semester. There will be periodic reports from the administration and the student committee as to progress in all of the above outlined areas.

"Not Racial"

Mr. Woodard, the Director of South House, who had met with the student leaders on both days of disturbance at White Plains High School later commented:

"I can't emphasize too much that the Negro students felt that the school curriculum needs some additions. This was not a racial situation. They were showing their support for some of their very strong beliefs. They have not thought less in any way of their peers and have no intention of infringing on anyone. What happened here was part of the whole (Negro) national movement."

Between Wednesday, March 27 and Tuesday, April 2, when the progress report was due, several meetings were held in the community. The superintendent went to a meeting at the CAP Eastview Neighborhood Center and the high school principal went to one at the CAP Ferris Avenue Neighborhood Center.

At the Ferris Avenue meeting, James Worth, a high school junior who was destined to play a significant leadership role among Negro students that summer and during the 1968-69 fall term, spoke for the first time. Parents in these meetings seemed sympathetic to the student demands, but at the same time they appeared relieved that no violence had occurred and that severe repressive measures had not been taken.

On March 28, the *Reporter Dispatch* commented editorially on the disturbances. The newspaper's reactions in summary were: 1) the staff and community leadership were to be commended on the way the situation had been handled, 2) the concern lest such youthful demonstrations get out of hand, and 3) a warning to adult activists to keep hands off.

April 2 was the target date for a report from the administration on the progress made in meeting their demands. The principal announced that students desiring to do so could go to the auditorium following the attendance period. House Director Daniel Woodard was selected to preside over the meeting. On the afternoon of April 1, a proposal had been given the leaders and they had given it tentative acceptance. They were told that mandatory assemblies would have to come at the discretion of the administration. To this they objected. The administration had taken some precautions with regard to the April 2 meeting. Policemen were stationed in the conference room and at two points close to the school. The mayor, the president of the board of education, and the editor of the newspaper were present in the building to observe the dealings with the students.

"It Doesn't Look Good"

At the breakup of the April 2 assembly, the principal received a call from a faculty member who had been in the auditorium, saying: "They're on their way. It doesn't look good; they are angry."

The students moved through the upstairs of the C building and by this time it was obvious that they were going to disrupt activity as far as possible.

In the meantime, Dr. Antin had observed some 35 white youths formed in a group with their automobiles in parking lot A. They were driving around the lot and shouting things which could not be understood from upstairs in the building. With Mr. Riviezzo (Head Custodian), Dr. Antin succeeded in engaging these youths in discussion for twenty-five minutes. They were distressed at what was going on in the school. The resented the fact that Negro students should be allowed to be disruptive when white ones could not. They also questioned any emphasis on Negro history, since there was no emphasis on Italian, Swedish or Russian history.

As the black students left the auditorium, they assembled outside the library and blocked passage of all traffic. They went through the cafeterias and disrupted the food lines. White students were rerouted to the best of the ability of the staff. A great effort was made to keep the demonstrating students isolated from the others in order to keep down possible disturbances.

Toward the end of the fifth period, the most serious incident of the entire disturbance took place. A white girl was pinned against the wall and several blacks were hitting, screaming and yelling, "kill her." It later turned out that this young lady and a friend had been accused of considerable race baiting before and during the disturbance.

Confrontation

The next most potentially serious incident also occurred on that day. The Negro youths were moving toward the lawn when they were confronted by a group of white youths, allegedly from the Silver Lake area of the community. Dr. Antin reports: "Now at this point, Offie Wortham said to the white youngsters, 'What do you fellows want – do you want to fight?' And one of them said, 'No, we don't want to fight.' He (Wortham) said, 'Well these boys don't want to fight either. What do you want?' They said, 'Well, we don't understand what's going on. We don't understand what it is all about. No one will tell us. All we see is a lot of things happening and no one tells us. The school doesn't tell us. You tell us what it is all about.' And Wortham said: 'That's exactly what we want to do. We want to have conversation and discuss the problems and you know who's opposed to this? The administration. They're afraid you'll fight.

That's why you are being kept apart. You don't want to fight and we don't want to fight. These boys don't want to fight. All we'd like to do is talk. Let's go somewhere where we can talk.' Wortham later suggested that they go to the gym." Meanwhile, the group milling around on the lawn swelled to some 1,000 to 1,200 white and Negro students.

At 1:30, it was decided to close school for the day because of the seriousness of the situation. It was announced over the public address system that school would close. The administration also gave permission for any students who wished to engage in a constructive discussion of the issues to go to the gymnasium for that purpose. James Myers was given a bull horn so that he could make this announcement on the front lawn. Some 200 to 300 students, black and white, went to the gym and heard the student leaders state their grievances, explain their demands, and answer questions posed by non-demonstrating students. This session in the gymnasium lasted about an hour, with the crowd gradually dwindling.

On the evening of April 2, the superintendent asked the Board to meet in executive session, along with the leaders of White Plains – the mayor, councilmen, commissioners of public safety and recreation, police chief, editor of the newspaper – and the junior high principals, the high school principal and high school administrators and teachers who had played key roles in working with the protesting students. At this meeting, Dr. Johnson announced that schools – all schools in the system – would be closed the next day so that a districtwide faculty meeting might be convened in the high school auditorium in order that everyone on the faculty might be accurately informed as to developments at the high school and the policy of the administration. (Schools would have been closed during the afternoon, in any event, as the annual spring teachers work conference was scheduled for that date. Dr. Johnson's decision extended the closing to a full day rather than the scheduled half day.)

Administrative Response

At the executive session, on the radio later that evening, and at the districtwide faculty meeting Wednesday morning, the superintendent also outlined a firm and unequivocal policy for reconvening school in orderly fashion Thursday morning, with any student who cut classes to be suspended immediately.

He stressed these two points. "Legitimate and constructive requests of the pupils should be treated with respect and hopefully become the basis of more constructive involvement of these students in the school program. Standards of conduct must not be abrogated or diminished in the school system. Discipline must be upheld."

The Reporter Dispatch gave these policy decisions wide interpretation in its story of April 3.

Agreement Signed

On April 3, the administration and the three student leaders, after six hours of negotiation, reached an agreement which was subsequently endorsed by the black student group. That morning while the superintendent was addressing the districtwide staff, a skilled labor union organizer, Mr. Will Dixon, active in the black adult community of White Plains, had met with the student leaders in an effort to mediate the impasse. Mr. Dixon accompanied the youths to Education House and continued to work with them, as a group, in caucus, and individually during the hours of negotiation with school administrators. Mr. Dixon's mediation was instrumental in preventing polarization and moving the students and administrators to a point of accommodation. This agreement was announced by Dr. Johnson on the radio that evening and given to the *Dispatch* for its edition of April 4. (The newspaper is an afternoon paper.) It was also announced to the high school student body by one of the three student leaders at an assembly Thursday morning. Copies had been mimeographed and placed in the school office for any student who wanted one.

The agreement was:

> We the undersigned, meeting on April 3, 1968, discussed student grievances as follows:
>
> 1) That Negro history be integrated into the total curriculum.
>
> 2) That there be assembly programs scheduled for regular assembly periods with speakers and performers on Negro history and culture.
>
> We have mutually agreed that:
>
> 1) As soon as, in the judgment of Mr. Donaghey and Mr. Woodard, tension is down in both the High School and the community, assemblies will be held under their direction and with the consultation of the student leaders and that there will be another meeting on Wednesday, April 10, to discuss implementation of assembly programs, assuming that tensions have been reduced.
>
> 2) The three leaders, namely, James Myers, John Fox, and Glenn Rogers, with an administrative staff member, will be given an opportunity to meet with all students to discuss this mutual agreement. (Date to be worked out)
>
> 3) We will meet periodically to discuss the progress and implementation of our programs.
>
> 4. On April 22 the Administration will give a definite answer as to whether Negro history and culture will be integrated in the curriculum for 1968-69.
>
> 5) The student leaders will do all in their power to establish communication with the administration and to help reestablish order.
>
> 6) The administrative staff will do all in its power to establish communication with the student body and to reduce tensions within the community.
>
> James Myers
> John Fox
> Glenn Rogers
> Carroll F. Johnson
> Superintendent of Schools
>
> Manson A. Donaghey
> Principal, White Plains High School
>
> Daniel A. Woodard
> Director, South House
> White Plains High School

In the white community, there developed widespread criticism of the administration for the negotiations and the signing of an agreement, especially in light of the decisive policy determination of the day before.

Will They Return?

The assembly at which these terms were presented closed at 9:10 a.m. The test was whether the students could then be persuaded to return to classes. When several students refused to move from the corridor, Sergeant Rooks and members of his police staff (all in plain clothes, however) came out of the room where they had been discreetly stationed and were ready to intervene. Some of the staff, however, asked that they be allowed to make one more effort to move the students peacefully. Mr. Binotto, Football Coach Dean Loucks and Coach Harry Jefferson (Negro) with the assistance of a citizen, Will Dixon (Negro labor union organizer who had participated in the April 3 student-administration negotiations which concluded in the signing of the written agreement), finally persuaded the remaining loiterers to go to class. Police intervention was that near, but was never actually invoked. The remainder of the day went peacefully.

That evening, April 4, the news was flashed that the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., had been assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee. The superintendent contacted members of his administrative staff and a prominent Negro clergyman, and made plans to have some sort of memorial service the first thing Friday morning at the high school. Friday morning, the Rev. Edgar Jordan of Trinity Church went to the high school, as agreed, and conducted a service of tribute over the school's public address system. Mr. Donaghey and the Superintendent of Schools also gave statements in tribute as part of that observance. Some black students did not want to go to class, however. They were permitted to go to Trinity Church with Mr. Jordan, who had scheduled memorial services at his church. Several other churches also had services and some students went to various of these. In one instance, the minister was late getting to the church and the young people, in a very orderly manner, organized a song service of their own until he arrived.

The students from White Plains High School had been given the option of going home after the service or returning to school. Approximately two-thirds of them did return to school.

A fund-raising basketball game between a faculty team and the football Jets was canceled for the weekend.

School was held the following Monday, April 8, but was canceled, in memoriam, on Tuesday, April 9, the day of the King funeral services in Atlanta.

These events have been chronicled to provide a backdrop against which to develop the remainder of the report. There are obviously gaps in the materials. Many other aspects of the disturbances could not be included because of lack of space or information. Many other people played key roles. Exactly what these roles were, however, is now obscured by lack of information or lack of clarity.

Suffice it to say that the skeleton of events is sufficiently limned, it is believed, to allow the reader to follow the ensuing analysis.

—III—

COMMUNITY BACKGROUND OF THE INCIDENT

Before turning to an analysis of this disturbance, it seems relevant to look at the community and try to interpret the context in which it occurred. White Plains is the County seat of Westchester County. It is a suburban city of approximately 55,000 population located 23 miles from Manhattan – the heart of New York City. Its school system enrolled 8,842 children in kindergarten through twelfth grades in 1968-69. Of this number of scholastics, 17.8 per cent are Negro, and the majority of Negro students live in public housing units in the center of the city. The white population is above average in income and has several upper income, typically suburban development neighborhoods.

For many years, the school system has been exceptionally sensitive to its problems of racial relations. There had always been a single senior high school. In the late 1950's the community decided to build a new school rather than a second senior high facility in order to serve the entire community and thus bring all secondary school children to a common encounter. The old senior high school, Highlands, was converted into both junior high and elementary use. This, with two other junior high schools, Battle Hill and Eastview, are so zoned that all have had, since the opening of the high school in 1960, a more evenly racially balanced student body.

On October 1, 1968, these proportions were as follows: Battle Hill, 24.1 per cent Negro; East View, 17.3 per cent Negro; Highlands, 17.1 per cent Negro. Since 1963 these figures have not increased significantly. The total percentage of Negro children in the schools has increased only 1.6 per cent during the past five years.

The most outstanding job of desegregation of elementary and junior high schools of any in the country, has perhaps been done in White Plains. In 1964, the Board of Education adopted a Racial Balance Policy stipulating that Negro enrollment in each school building must be maintained with a range of approximately 10 per cent minimum to approximately 30 per cent maximum. To implement this policy the Rochambeau Elementary School was closed and attendance areas were redrawn so that 20 per cent of all elementary school children were reassigned, and bus transportation was instituted for roughly 10 per cent of the elementary population. In this operation, children from the lowest income populations of the community were rezoned, in some instances, to attend school with some of the highest income populations of the city. This feat of desegregation was accomplished with such skill that there were no demonstrations or pressures of consequence from any segment of the community.

Achievement Study

Three years after the plan was instituted, the White Plains School System published a before-and-after study of children's achievement based on Stanford Achievement Test Scores. Reading and arithmetic scores were examined to see how comparable groups of Negro and white children performed before and after integration in the schools.

The white and Negro pre-integration control groups were pupils who were in the third grade in 1960. Their third and fifth grade reading and arithmetic percentile rankings were compared with the third and fifth grade reading and arithmetic percentile rankings of the post-integration groups of white and Negro children who were in the third grade in 1964 when the schools were desegregated.

The study also examined the percentile rankings of groups of white and predominantly Negro pupils who entered first grade in September 1964, the year desegregation was instituted. These two groups of students were comparable in I.Q. and place-of-residence to their respective pre-integration control groups (in third grade 1960).

The study indicated that Negro pupils who attended integrated schools from first grade on have higher percentile rankings than Negro pupils who were already in third grade when the school system was desegregated. Both of those groups, however, did better than did the control pre-integration group of Negro children who were in the predominantly Negro center city school from the first through sixth grades.

White groups studied indicated that white youngsters are doing as well as, or better than, comparable groups of white children did in the all-white elementary schools before the 1964 city-wide desegregation plan.

Some persons interviewed felt that the unrest of the spring of 1968 would not have happened within a few more years, because the entire population of the community, black and white, would have grown up in the schools in a desegregated atmosphere.

Urban Renewal

One complicating factor concerning the city-wide context of the disturbance which we were unable to assess was the impact of the urban renewal program. Housing for low income groups has always been scarce in the city. It is suggested that the schools export most of their successes with the low income Negro population – due to the fact that as soon as they rise in income and achieve some stability and economic strength they have to move from the public housing to private accommodations. Since there is practically no low middle income housing in the city, it means they are forced to move to areas outside. Almost all Negro middle class population which works in White Plains lives in nearby Greenburgh.

In addition to the traditional shortage of housing, however, is the ambitious urban renewal program of White Plains. One has only to visit the areas around the business section to realize how vast this is. It is reported to be the most extensive urban renewal, proportionate to the size of the city, of any in the United States. Of course, urban renewal means removal of people in order to bring new construction. In the Negro community there was considerable resentment because of this program. The quip made by Negroes is that "Urban renewal means Negro removal." In the long run this is perhaps not the case. The Commission on Human Rights for the city reports that 749 dwelling units were completed, started or approved during a twelve month period to June 1968. Of these, 262 were for low income families. At the time of these disturbances, however, the issue of housing was more sensitive than it was at the time the report was being written.

The CAP Program

Another factor stemming from the community context is the development of the Community Action Program which was financed largely by federal poverty money. The philosophy underlying this program was "maximum feasible participation" of the poor. In addition to the Ferris Avenue and East View CAP centers there was a considerable program at the independent Carver Center. In all of these programs there was special emphasis on problems of the poor, especially the Negro. Mr. Offie Wortham was employed as a community organizer for the CAP program in addition to those who ran the centers.

Many in the community believed that this program was responsible for the Negro youths' staging the boycott. They point to the speed with which the staff of the agency came to the campus once the disturbance started. Others contend that the negotiations stemmed from some source in the program. One person, more deeply involved with the youths but not connected with the centers, said she observed a discernible trend during the summer of 1967 for the boys to "leave off horsing around and become more serious. She said they had started reading the works of Malcolm X and Stokeley Carmichel. She indicated that what was bothering them was related basically to their very identity as human beings. She said one could sense that they were changing from carefree youths to sober, perplexed people.

The staff and the members of the board of CAP thought they might have had a little to do with the disturbance since they had been trying to involve the people in the solution of their problems. Some of the board members said they would have felt very complimented to have been responsible for it, but doubted if they had that much influence through their program.

Ethnic Backgrounds

One additional factor which should be considered in looking at the incident relates to the ethnic arrangements of the community. The Negro population of the city constitutes about 12 per cent of the total population. There has been a community of Italian ancestry in the community for a long time. It is located principally in the Ferris Avenue section of the city. Since World War II, the greatest in-migration of population has been people of Jewish and Roman Catholic faiths. Approximately 14 per cent of the White Plains children attend non-public school.

One factor which may be of undetermined significance is that of social class. As suggested with reference to housing, the gap between the white population as a whole and the Negro population as a whole is great — so far as social class is concerned. Very few middle class Negroes can afford to live in White Plains. Most of the Negro professionals who work in the city live in surrounding communities.

One aspect of social class is income. Some evidence of the disparity in income in the community can be obtained from a recent study for 1966. Thirty-eight and six-tenths per cent of the households had incomes of over $10,000 per year, 26 per cent had incomes of under $5,000 per year, 12.7 per cent had incomes from between $8,000 to $10,000 per year, while 14.5 per cent had incomes of less than $3,000 per year. Thus it can be seen that roughly 40 per cent of the households had incomes of over $10,000 and over 25 per cent had incomes of under $5,000 while only one-third of the households (35.4%) had incomes within the $5,000 to $10,000 range.[1]

General Considerations

White Plains is one of the more fortunate communities of America in many respects. It is small enough to be seen whole. It has a good balance between residential property, commercial and industrial land use. This makes its true property valuation $61,474 per child as a base for community services. Its expenditure per child on the education of the city's youth for 1968-69 is estimated at $1,576.80, based on weighted average daily attendance.

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[1] Based on data appearing in *Sales Management Magazine*, June, 1967

The city has almost exactly its pro rata share of the Negro population of the metropolis of which it is a part. It probably has less than its pro rata share of middle income Negro population. These segments of the population are locked securely in the encounter with each other – thanks to the desegregated educational program. The city is blessed with resources with which to provide a quality program to make this encounter a meaningful one. The morale of the city is high in every department. The power structure of the community has avoided becoming fragmented by the developmental pains through which the city has gone. There are few, if any, blocks of power buttressed against each other, making for disruption, turmoil, and show-down confrontations such as has characterized the core cities.

Moreover, the city seems to have a will to work its problems out in constructive ways – conservative ways to be sure – but, nevertheless, in a manner befitting traditional America at its best.

It is in this context that the boycott at the school is to be surveyed. One could count on the community, having a good school system – never good enough, to be sure, to satisfy upwardly mobile middle class parents – never good enough to justify all the money spent on it, according to the financial conservatives – but, all in all, a "good school system". One could also count on other community services approximating the standards set by an enlightened society. One is led to approach the study of the disturbance, then, as being something which had motivations deeper than the usual explanations of desperate living conditions, rank discrimination, or youths lashing out in a demoralized community which is without clear norms of behaviour to guide its young citizenry.

—IV—

THE SOCIAL CLASS DIMENSION

We turn now to an examination of factors which may explain the incident of March 26 through April 4, 1968.

The first of these relates to social class issues in secondary education. It is well known that as secondary schools bring into educational efforts the lowest populations on the rungs of the socio-economic ladder, the problems increase. Stated another way, when secondary schools served only an elite, they had no major behavioral problems. As they become more democratic and serve wider ranges of population, their problems grow larger.

The reasons are many. In the first place, the upper income populations tend to provide the motivation for their children's learning. In the lower income groups the desire for the children to learn is as great in the family, perhaps, but the parents do not have the control over the children. Some interviewers observed that the youths who were involved in the incident were berating their families almost as much as they were berating "the system" in their talks before the community groups.

A second reason for lower socio-economic children's not being as "malleable to the forges of the school" as others is that teachers themselves tend to be upwardly mobile people who aspire to a secure place in the status arrangement of the middle class. Warner's[1] studies of high schools of many years ago indicate that in the average community the high school is about the "snootiest" among the institutions. Even the teacher's status is determined by the subjects she teaches — those who teach academic subjects rate highest; those who teach commercial and other applied subjects, next, and the vocational teachers, lowest.

Warner noted that only on the athletic field did the youth from across the tracks get his chance. It is worth noting, in this regard, that in White Plains the Negro youths are best represented in the athletic program of all the extracurricular undertakings in the school.

Closely related to the teacher's status is his conception of role. In the elementary grades, proportionately more emphasis is placed on factors of growth and development of the child. In the high school, the teacher's concern is more that of subject matter orientation. The teacher sees his role more as that of imparting knowledge and understanding. Many of those interviewed, both within the staff and outside, suggested that teachers in the White Plains High School felt themselves better off when they had the accelerated classes and less well off when they taught the others. In this regard they are not unique. They have their counterparts in every high school of the land.

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[1] W. Lloyd Warner with Wilfrid C. Bailey, et al., *Democracy In Jonesville* (New York, Harper, 1949)

Sense of Alienation

A third factor is undoubtedly the sense of alienation which pervades the life of the low socio-economic youth in the high school. A large number of White Plains High School youths drive automobiles to school. A large number of the Negro youths who are also of low socio-economic families ride the city bus or walk. Few live within walking distance. Many of the middle class youths are interested in clubs, organizations, social events or costly activities which the low income youth can't afford, or else does not fit into. Many of the low income youths work after school. This further precludes their participation in such affairs. Some are humiliated and made to feel ashamed because of their backgrounds.

If the school were seen in one perspective it would be a great sorting mechanism designed to teach children their place in the social order. Its input would be all the children of all the people; its output would be people who know their place. Like other high schools of America, the White Plains High School performs this function. Under these conditions, when youths give up the struggle for place, the school has no further attraction for them. In a sense, it then becomes a custodial institution. Hence, behavior problems tend to become accentuated.

One thinks of this type of social class problem first when examining the causes of such a disturbance. He asks himself, "Is this a situation in which some lower socio-economic children are acting out their frustrations with a system which was not made to fit them, or is there something deeper than this?"

Was It A Class Issue?

It was assumed in the beginning of the study that if this class issue were the key factor several things would have followed: 1) Upper class Negro youths would not then have been participants. 2) There would be low morale. 3) Dress would be deviant – not a militancy behavior. 4) There would be much self-segregation. 5) There would be much apathy insofar as grades were concerned, and 6) not a great amount of participation in school organizations.

Now for an examination of these in order:)1 With regard to upper class youths participating — it is clear that all segments of the minority community were involved in the disturbance. It was indicated that the Battle Hill Junior High School had no problems during the entire incident. This school has traditionally had a slightly more heterogeneous Negro population with more upwardly mobile Negro families than the other junior highs, and a much more stable one; i.e., other than Church Street Elementary, the Battle Hill Elementary School is the only "feeder" school for Battle Hill Junior High. The result is that the majority of Negro pupils tend to enter first grade in the Battle Hill building and remain there through ninth grade.

Such class distinctions as did exist, however, did not seem to be a factor in the boycott.

The converse is also true. In the autumn, following the spring incident, there occurred what is referred to as "The Apple Throwing Incident". In this instance, some of the girls from the low income housing project area were involved in a fracas with some of the other students. They created a considerable amount of disruption, and tried to get the other Negro students to join them in walking out of the school. None joined. It seems clear that if this were a "low socio-economic youth's holiday" they would have followed the girls in the same way they followed the leaders of the boycott on March 26.

2) With regard to the issue of morale, it seems fair to say that the morale of the youths was high at the time of the incident — at least among the leaders. The demands they made did not relate to better food, more concessions, or even the controversial issue of allowing students to leave the campus for lunch. The issues were those of more content in curriculum and other matters of an academic nature.

Group Identification

The third assumption did not hold either. The dress was more that of the militancy group with which they sought identity. There was none of the "zoot suit" or "black leather jacket" type dress such as has characterized other deviant groups in other times. The deviancy was with regard to symbols which related to the black revolution.

4) There is an amount of self-segregation at the White Plains High School. A considerable amount of it is on a socio-economic basis, however. Since the beginning of the race relations change, this segregation has been more on the basis of race. It seems to connote more of a willingness to be identified with the Negro community.

5) There were those who were apathetic concerning grades among the

Negro youths in the high school. However, the youths who took the lead in this disturbance were not of this breed. Some may not have been scholars by the standards of many of their white peers, but both James Myers and Glenn Rogers received scholarships to universities. We were told that they presented the titles of more than 85 books about and by Negroes which they felt should be in the library of the school.

6) There was little information concerning school participation by the leadership of the boycott. However, among those who have carried forward the things for which the initial group led, there is considerable participation. These students who led the boycott were not the alienated lower socio-economic group only. These latter students were part of it, but they were not among the leadership of it.

One gets the impression that the social class factor cannot be eliminated from consideration. Certainly, some of the students who constituted the 150 to 200 participants in the affair were marginal students who were looking for a holiday, excitement, anything which would serve as an antidote to the life of a school in which they were seen largely as problems. This was not the leadership, however. It was of a different variety.

– V –

YOUTHS TESTING NEW ROLES

A second hypothesis which comes to mind in disturbances of this sort is that such behavior is just youth testing out new roles – a sort of "climbing fool's hill". After all, it occurred in the spring. It is the season of the year in which college "panty raids" and other bizarre behavior have been traditional in American education. For Negro youth, this testing would have double meaning: first, the movement from childhood into young adulthood – with all its ambivalences and its untoward behaviors; secondly, the emergence of the Negro into new found roles which do not fit the tradition of the group. The sort of thing which led a Negro newspaperman to say once that he preferred the South. There he knew where he stood. He might not like where he was standing, but at least there was no equivocation about it. In a sense, these combine for Negro youth, it may be assumed, who have been reared in desegregated situations. As dating and social affairs become prominent in puberty, there is some tendency for the dominant group parents to become concerned about whom their children date.

It would be assumed that, to the extent this factor would be operating, the behavior 1) would not be socio-economically based; 2) There would be much chip-on-the-shoulder type of complaint; 3) There would be considerable aggressive behavior – almost all minority groups have been accused at some stage of their envelopment into the dominant society as being "pushy"; 4) There would be many complaints of unfairness and racial injustice – Where one suspects prejudice, he never is sure whether the breaks both in his favor and against him are because he deserved them or because of "who he is"; 5) There would be ambivalence in behavior – now accepting newfound roles and assuming the responsibility going with it, and now reverting to more infantile patterns, and 6) There would be found the type of rebellion found in all youths, but in this instance with just a racial overtone.

These assumptions did not seem to fit this series of incidents. One could not deny but that there were aspects of this type of behavior expressed from time to time. However, in the broad sweep of the affair these were minor points of consideration.

1) Socio-economic Base: As indicated above, there was not so much a

socio-economic base to the leadership of the movement, although this was undoubtedly present in the entire performance. Some felt that the strength of the movement came from the Winbrook Housing area, the large public housing project in the core city.

2) There was some chip-on-the-shoulder type acting out on the campus. There is some blame upon the school and its leadership for the failure on the part of some Negro children. One of the factors, some felt, in dealing with black hostility was the memories some of these parents had of the treatment they had received from some of these same faculty people when they were students in the schools of White Plains many years before.

3) There was some aggressive behavior. Some faculty members were accused of having double standards in which a Negro child could get away with things for which a white would be expelled. We will deal with this in a subsequent chapter on discipline.

4) There were some complaints of unfairness and racial injustice. This, however, was not pronounced – at least in the investigator's judgment.

5) There was some ambivalence in behavior. By and large, however, the actions of the black group were well thought out, consistent and purposeful. They did not have the ring of youth "climbing fool's hill".

Of Sterner Stuff

The data examined from this viewpoint present some of the characteristics of youth, but the cause in which they were engaged was of sterner stuff. They were not accusing faculty primarily; they were not seeking a scapegoat for their own limitations; they were not out on a lark – they were dead serious; they were, as one of them stated it, "trying to do something for those who come after us" in this school.

Some questioned their honesty in light of the type of demands which they made. The criticism was that they knew before they started that the school had been working on a course in Negro history and culture since the beginning of the year. Others questioned whether they really knew this or not. These laid the fault at the door of poor communications. Some of the students doubted the integrity of the administration, contending that it used delaying tactics of elaborate committee work to wear students down. These felt that protest was the only way to get a hearing. They point with glee at how quickly the administration came up with the course once it found itself in trouble.

It was obvious that these youths were breaking new ground for themselves, testing new roles, but that the disturbance would not have occurred had its impetus been dependent solely upon this type of motivation.

–VI–

BREAKDOWN OF AUTHORITY

A third hypothesis which needed to be tested relates to discipline and what might be called the breakdown of the perimeters of authority. This aspect of the incident caused more troubled thought and soul searching than any except the racial nature of the matter.

White Plains has long considered itself upper and middle class with types of behavior befitting such a community. With its excellent police force, its exceptional services for those who are marginal to the standards of the community, it came as a blow to the community's pride that "such a thing could happen to us". It was an indication that perhaps the norms of good conduct were not sufficiently clear and firm for youths growing up in the community to become socialized into them.

For this reason, it was hard for some to believe that these youths ever could have dared bring off a thing of this sort on their own. Perhaps it was what the editor of the newspaper referred to when he warned "agitators" to keep hands off. Some thought it must have occurred because minority families and the youths who were assimilated into the behavior norms of the society were forced to move as their economic status improved. Hence, there was an influx of people who had not been brought up in the type of climate White Plains provides.

This aspect of "perimeters of authority" also bears closer examination. Most people tend to test out their "life space" to see "how far they can go". This is exemplified by the difficulty a substitute teacher has the first day she spends with a class. She doesn't get much done, because the children are "trying her out" to see how far they can go. Students will often be angels in one teacher's class and hellions in another's, for they know what they can get away with in the one and not in the other. Democracy does not mean absence of authority. It means, instead, that standards are set by the group and enforced by one whose power of enforcement is legitimate.

One could envision a school in which the vacillation and equivocation — especially in dealing with sensitive situations such as race — would be such that anarchy would prevail. This is the typical stereotype of what is referred to as "the blackboard jungle" school. If White Plains High School had been such a place, and if this had been the source of the incident, then one would expect that the incident would have been 1) a riot instead of a disturbance, 2) characterized by wanton destructiveness, 3) led by youths whose behavior would have been of a gang nature, 4) touched off by some emotional incident which would have been the spark to set off the tinder, 5) preceded by a high degree of tension and 6) led by youths who were known to the authorities as "trouble makers".

Rather Talk Than Fight

This was just not that type of disturbance. At the points of tension which erupted during the incident, the leaders of the group helped to stop disputes which arose. They told the white boys when they came into confrontation with them that they did not want to fight – they wanted to talk. They gained white followers as the dispute went on, so that at the termination of the incident many white youths were taking at least a tolerant interest in the demonstration.

There was no destruction of property until the second round of negotiations had broken down. The destruction then amounted principally to some youths' going through the cafeterias and seizing food without paying for it.

There is little evidence that the youths who led the boycott were personal friends before the incident drew them together. Glenn Rogers seemed to have been drawn into the negotiations because he was a peacemaker. James Myers was president of the local NAACP student chapter. John Fox seemed to have been bypassed in the leadership of the group once the roles within the group "jelled".

None of the leadership of the group was known to the police or law enforcement officials as having been a troublemaker in the community.

What then are the issues?

The first is that of "law and order". Members of the staff and citizens of the community were perplexed by the outbreak. Many felt the superintendent should not have negotiated with students under such pressure. Some suggested that he should have required that they go through the Student Organization to present their requests. This would have been training in working with proper grievance procedures in a democratic society.

Some students, as indicated, felt that partiality was being shown to the Negroes. There are still those in the student body who feel that the Negro students are receiving special treatment.

Negotiation Under Duress

The football coach, Dean Loucks, a very respected citizen of the community as well as a status figure in the faculty, saw fit to resign as coach, retaining his position as a teacher, because of his concern over the handling of the incident. His contention was that the negotiation under duress of curriculum matters with students had implications which he could not accept. In this he was joined later by some 800 persons who put their signatures to a letter to the board of education expressing the hope that the resignation had "brought into focus a problem that must be faced in our ctiy – and in our nation as well". They contended that "Any system which condones and rewards violence and illegality by its students is offering the wrong kind of education". They called upon "Those in the White Plains school system who make decisions and formulate policy to make it abundantly clear to the students and the people of White Plains that never again will concessions or compromises be negotiated as a result of disorderly protests, or violence, or the threat of violence".

Others in the community felt that the staff and the administration had handled the situation admirably. There was virually no destruction of property. While there were tense moments, there was little violence. No one was expelled from school. No one came out of it with an encounter with police.

The investigator found only one or two persons, however critical of the administration for the way it handled the incident, who could suggest how they would have done differently had they been confronted with a comparable situation. It may be begging the case, but the impression was gained that those who were critical of the handling of the incident, aside from a few who were outright prejudiced against Negroes and perhaps a few who wanted to use it to gain their own political ambitions, were persons who were deeply perplexed about the totality of the society of which this was but an intimation.

Some mentioned the subsequent Columbia University take-over by students and the Berkeley disturbances. They felt that these, coupled with inner city riots, meant that our society was losing its cohesiveness.

Realities of the Situation

Here we need to examine the realities of the situation. There was no violence during the first two days. There were no major infractions of rules except that students were out of class and conduct was disorderly. While other community school systems, such as neighboring Greenburgh 8, had destructiveness there was none of this evident in White Plains. One mistake made by many was that this was conceived as a "race riot". Once there was disturbance, all the images of inner city race riots were called up. It was not that sort of thing.

However, granted that it had been of a different nature, what would the superintendent have done? He was presented with a group of more than 100 students on the lawn. According to Police Chief Henry, the rapport with the schools was good. Men were on hand to deal with the situation if it became necessary. However, there was nothing serious enough to warrant the police taking action on their own. He indicated that persons not accustomed to working in tension situations tend to "see the problems but not the results. Locking people up is not the complete answer". One other reaction of his should indicate the depth of his experience with such matters. He indicated that really serious disturbances tend to be created when authorities attempt to intervene in situations with which they do not have resources to deal. His feeling was that Superintendent Johnson was better advised to handle the matter as he did, rather than to try dealing with a group of that size without proper resources.

End-of-Patience

After the incident of April 2nd, when there were public disburbances, some scuffles between Negroes and whites and misbehavior in the cafeteria, there did seem to be an approaching end-of-patience in dealing with the problem. This was sufficiently clear that the *Reporter Dispatch* headlined an impending "crack-down" on the students if they persisted.

Fortunately, Wednesday saw the schools closed, in part for the traditional teachers' meeting. This gave a chance for further negotiations. By Thursday when school opened, an agreement had been reached.

It was apparent, on Thursday, that if the troubles had persisted the police would have been used. In fact, Sergeant Rooks was dissuaded by three staff members from moving in on the twenty-five or more who persisted in congregating in the hall after the assembly period. Fortunately their persuasion caused the youths to go on to class, and order prevailed.

One other aspect of this "law and order issue" is perhaps worth examining. It relates to the nature of the disorder. Had the disturbance been just a breakdown of authority, had it been just a group of youths who were hoodlums "running wild", had it been a situation where serious tension had built up and an explosion had occurred, then, in the judgment of the investigator, it would have been inexcusable for the administration to have tried to handle it through negotiations.

It was not that kind of an incident. Some students among the whites apparently thought it was in the beginning; some staff and many community people apparently thought it was that kind of "trouble". Some parents came for their children, some white youths prepared to do battle, and as late as Tuesday, April 2, staff members were trying to keep the Negro and white youths apart – in spite of the fact that many white youths, upon finding what it was all about, were beginning to take a more tolerant attitude.

Avoid Force If Possible

Later we shall discuss what we believe to have been the nature of the disturbance. Suffice it here to say that ideological issues are not dealt with by force, if it can be helped. Such an approach would have made martyrs of the leaders, would have alienated the Negro community completely from the white, and would have set up race relations issues which could not have been overcome for a decade. It would have served notice upon the minority community that any serious pressure it might exert would be met by force. It would have driven the Negro community solidly into the arms of the militants, or else reminded it of its powerlessness, and the Negro community would then have slipped back into the type of apathy which its leaders were trying desperately to overcome.

School Discipline

Having reached the conclusion outlined above, however, one should not suppose that there are no problems of discipline within the school.

Every institution entrusted with socializing youths into the norms of the community works in two ways. It tries to assist in meeting the problems which youth have, and help them in dealing with them so that they do not find it necessary to act out their aggressions. For this reason, guidance and counseling services are offered, social services provided and, in extreme cases, therapy given. The other way is to provide sanctions against those who disobey the rules. In the long run, the objective is to develop "inner controls" insofar as possible, so that a person will behave from ethical judgments concerning his relation to fellow citizens. The sanctions are designed to provide "outer controls" which deter infractions because of the realization that sanctions will be applied if rules are violated.

The former places an accent on involving those to whom the rules will apply, in making the rules, so that they feel part of the group. The latter interposes the experience and power of adults and says, "We know best. This is the way it is going to be".

Some Vacillation

White Plains High School has vacillated somewhat between these two viewpoints in the past several years. The architecture is designed for a responsible group of students. There are 35 separate exits to the building. School authorities could not control students within it if they tried. It is not designed to be a custodial institution.

On the other hand, there has been a growing feeling over the past few years that control of students was slipping away. Many of the older members of the staff, particularly, feel that the citizenship developed in students in the past is no longer being accomplished. They concede that this started long before the disturbance which we are studying. Many are frank enough to say that the major problem is a segment of the Negro student body. They contend that there is a double standard of conduct.

We return here to the issue of "shoring up" the perimeters of authority. If there is vacillation or equivocation as to the norms, a school is headed for trouble. A teacher is likely to overlook infractions if he feels that he will not be supported by his superiors.

Superiors will not support a teacher unless they feel secure enough with the community to believe their actions are understood. Actions are likely not to be undersood if the segment of the community involved does not believe such actions are just. Hence, there is a vicious cycle. If the school is alienated from any segment of the community, there is likely to be trouble with the children from that area.

Establishing Norms

A firm norm of behavior cannot be established and maintained unless and until: 1) The administration is convinced that the minority community is willing to have its children held to the same standards as everyone else; 2) The minority community believes the school is fair and just and does not discriminate in its treatment of children; 3) The school authorities feel secure enough in the trust and confidence of the minority community to hold to such norms.

There is one other aspect to this matter of discipline. There was great fear on the part of some teachers that this "breach" of authority would be the final step in the dissolution of the high school as they had known it.

In a way, they are correct. One senses a new "headiness" among many black students, and whites, as well, in this year following the disturbance. They feel the demonstration indicated they are not as powerless as they had supposed themselves to be. Like the consumers of other welfare services across the land, they are demanding a greater voice in shaping policies which determine the nature of the services. Like other erstwhile powerless people they are demanding "maximum feasible participation".

It is doubtful if the school will ever return to what it was before. Teachers will no longer be able to hide behind their "authority" in the way they have done in the past, or shield themselves from meeting the students in "free and open encounter." Discipline, from here on, for all will be more likely that which is imposed from the school as a community of people setting standards, than from a faculty setting the standards for a school-community.

Student Participation

This is highly threatening to some faculty members. It presents new challenges to both students and faculty. It makes mandatory that all the youths of the "community" which is the school be included in decision making which concerns them. The issue which concerns all is, "Will this type of discipline provide order and processes which are conducive to the growth and development of all?" This remains to be seen. The determination of what areas the students can be involved in, in decision making, is still moot. Dr. Johnson negotiated with the minority students on matters relating to curriculum. Some faculty members such as Dean Loucks thought this was in the domain of the faculty. Students did not agree in this instance.

The thrust of the future will have to be in the capacity of students to make responsible decisions. Most of American experience is that when people have to be responsible for their decisions, they make responsible ones. In American secondary education this has scarcely been tried. As one listens to some of these students called "activists," he feels that White Plains High School will go farther in this direction in the future.

Some students believe the teachers and the students should make common cause and the school should be run by a committee of five administrators, five teachers and five students. This, they contend, would amount to shared power.

One should observe that in the family and many other aspects of living, decision making has become democratized and those who are affected by decisions participate in making them. American secondary education has not kept pace with this development. In some measure, the demonstration by a group who were among the most marginal to the system was able to create sufficient disruption that the school had to pay attention to them. Most community people could not believe the students thought this up by themselves. They held that there must have been masterminding from the outside. Only one leading citizen interviewed believed the students were capable of bringing off a thing like this. He saw it as goodness that they could "do their thing" and bring the establishment up short.

Doubt Outsiders Responsible

We were unable, incidentally, to establish clearly the involvement of persons from the outside. It is our belief that the incident was engineered by the students on their own, but that after it got started there were several persons from the community involved in "advising" them. It was not always clear that they took this advice, however. In other words, if there were "masterminding," the leadership could not keep discipline to any particular mode of action.

The import of this section of the study is to indicate that the incident brought serious confrontations throughout the community concerning the nature of discipline, and the nature of "law and order." Men of good will will differ as to where they stand on these matters. The incident did not start the pressure for change in disciplinary standards; it was not a breach which is to be repaired.

It represents, in our judgment, another straw in the wind as to the way all power relations between groups are going. Discipline was involved in the incident, but the breakdown of discipline, of law and order, was not, in our judgment, the major factor. These youths were disciplined, purposive, and serious in what they were doing. There were some among them, perhaps, who saw in it a means of breaching the peace, but these were not at the heart of the action. The leaders of the group had far more serious things on their minds. They sought to keep the peace; they were helping separate those who came to confrontation; they were interpreting to the whites, effectively, what they were trying to "put across." This, we conclude, was different from a breakdown of discipline in its traditional sense.

—VII—

ABOUT THE SCHOOL

We examine, in this section, the school as an institution. The thought here, in assessing causes for such a disturbance, is that the school could conceivably have been so badly operated that it caught students and faculty in an encounter which was demoralizing and conflict producing. Hence, the incident could have been laid at the door of "just a poor school".

There are many problems which face the White Plains High School. One of these is the image carried of it by those who remember it when it was the status school of all the region. Older staff people tell of waiting years to get appointed to the staff. Once there, one did not leave. He had arrived. Now the turnover of the staff is about 15 per cent. Some of the more sophisticated students complain that it is still living on its past reputation. They resent its being thought of as a status high school .

Whether true or not, some students contend that the staff is declining. They contend that a lot of factual information is taught, but that this is without insightful frames of reference in which to place facts.

The "activist" students, including Negro and white, contend that all attention is given to the bright students and the others are neglected. They are particularly critical of guidance. Their concern is that time and effort are placed on the college bound, and very little time spent on the remainder of the students.

In this regard, it should be pointed out that a part of the vulnerability of the staff in dealing with the disturbance was that at the beginning of the 1967-68 school year a change had been made in the guidance arrangement. Heretofore, teachers had done the guidance. Beginning the fall before the incident, a change had been made to a traditional guidance system, with eight counselors filling these posts full time as specialists. Under the old system, a teacher would have been responsible for some forty to fifty children, would have known their names and would have been able to identify them. Under the new system which had been in operation for so short a time, no one knew most of them.

Administrative Changes

Another factor which may have significance is that the principal, Manson Donaghey, was the fourth administrator of the school in as many years. He had been in charge of it for only seven months. The school was not as "tightly run" as he would like to have seen it, or as he believes he would have achieved if he had been given more time before the incident.

In a reorganization study done by Cresap, McCormick and Paget, a recommendation had been implemented which put three of the five administrators in new positions at the beginning of the school year. In Donaghey's words, "We were shot down before we got off the ground".

In another context new arrangements had been made concerning the house organization. Instead of directors for four houses, these posts were now consolidated into two at the start of school in September, 1967. The impact of these administrative changes is difficult to assess.

At the level of curriculum, it should be pointed out that complaint had been made to the Social Studies Department concerning Negro history and culture as early as October or late September of 1967. This representation was made by Sandra Cramer, a student, who claimed she represented a group of students who had formed a study group on this matter. Later in November, a student handed Mr. Bruesewitz, Social Studies Chairman, a copy of the group's suggestions and indicated that he should get in touch with John Fox. After missing an appointment in January, Fox and James Worth met with the social studies chairman on March 7 and again March 14. They informed the chairman that a Freedom School was going to be opened on March 24 and that they thought it would be good for his teachers to attend. Another meeting was set for March 19, but was canceled by Mr. Bruesewitz because of some pressing matters. He sent a note, however, to the students indicating that he would pass their information on to the social studies staff.

This incident is cited to indicate the concern of the students prior to the disturbance, and also to indicate that, although a task force had been set up in the faculty to develop such a program, it was not thought of sufficient importance to mention to these students. It also indicates the lack of communication which existed within the school system.

Focus: The Upwardly Mobile

Looked at from another angle, the school – like most others – is geared to the education of the child of the upwardly mobile, highly motivated family. Its concern and preoccupation has been with the academically facile student. Said one teacher: "I doubt that Negro history and literature are the real needs of these children. They need recognition which they are not getting at the high school. There are an awful lot of children in White Plains from poorer homes. They feel short changed, educationally. They get as far as high school and are not reading well. They are not prepared to do anything, sense no hope for the future".

An analysis of the distribution of Negro children in the school's grouping arrangement of this year indicates the nature of the problem. In English, of 2,218 children of which 265 are Negro, not a single Negro student is among the 62 honors students. Only 20 are among the 750 students who are among the second level from the top, the college bound or "S" grouping of students. Almost 92 per cent of the Negro students (91.7%) are in the bottom level achievement groupings, called "E" and "M". In social studies, of the 2,322 students enrolled, of which 310 are Negro, only two Negroes are among the 85 Honors group and 22 are among the 805 students in the "S" or college bound classes. If Sociology 5 is eliminated from the offerings of the department, almost 92 per cent (91.9) are in the two bottom levels in social studies. In biology, there are 638 students enrolled, of which 84 are Negro. None of the Negroes is among the 20 Honors students and only three are among the 228 who are in the "S" section. Thus, 97.4 per cent of the Negro students are in the two lowest sections in the grouping.

Chemistry enrolls a total of 425 students of which 38 are Negro. None is in the Honors section, 10 are in the "S" and 28 are in the lowest level bracket (There are no "E" sections of Chemistry). Physics enrolls 175 students. Of these, four are Negro. None is in Honors and one is in the "S" section. If Earth Science is excluded from the science department's offerings, of the 1,238 students enrolled, only 126 are Negro. Of this group, none is in the Honors classes and only 14 are in the "S" sections, or slightly more than 11 per cent.

In Math, there are 1,702 students enrolled. Of this number, 1,380 are in sections other than General Math II and Elementary Algebra. In these sections, excluding Math II and Elementary Algebra, there are only 97 Negro students. One of these is in an Honors section and eight are in the "S" sections. In the Foreign Language Department, there were no Honors sections. In the nine "S" sections in three languages, there were 336 students enrolled. Only four Negro students out of a total enrollment of 81 Negro students were in the "S" section.

It should be realized that these enrollments are based on this year's figures. They represent a liberalization of the grouping arrangement from the previous year. It is generally believed that the situation was worse last year, insofar as concentration of minority children in lower achievement groups is concerned.

The data certainly indicate the issues faced by a modern high school of the comprehensive type (a designation for high schools which concentrate all work, both vocational and academic, in one building), when it attempts to educate wide ranges of socio-economic backgrounds.

Extracurricular Activities

We now turn to an examination of the extra-curricular program. Here, educators try to complement the academic program with meaningful activities which cut across lines of differences, and pull students into integrative experiences. Since interest groups also form around concerns which are unique, one would expect to find many integrated activities, and some which would not be. The strength of such a program is its ability to pull the "Cashmere Sweater" crowd away from tendencies to clique, and, by the same token, lure the lower socio-economic income youth away from self-segregation. Of course, another factor which enters into extracurricular activities is the objective of building an identity with the school, so as to socialize the youths into its traditions and develop some sense of belonging. In other words, the development of some sense of "community".

An analysis of participation in these activities in the White Plains High School suggests, again, the pattern of race relations which exists in the school. One should be warned that the amount of "belonging" to groups does not take into account the amount of duplication which is involved. Most high school extracurricular participation reveals a vast number of students belonging to no groups or organizations, and a few very popular and very involved persons frequently belonging to more than is good for their academic standing. We have no way of knowing the extent to which this is true in White Plains. The explanation is made simply to keep readers from misunderstanding the data which are presented herewith.

There are 43 separate student organizations reported in the high school. They range from athletics to academic affairs. These 43 organizations have 1,453 members. Of these 1,453 memberships, 150 are Negro.

Negroes Not Represented

Negroes are not represented in the following organizations: Chess Club, French Club, Golf Team, Ice Hockey, Math Club, National Honor Society, North Star Story, Political Discussion Group, Roar, Senior Literary Discussion Group, Southern Exposure, Swim Leaders, Synchronized Swimming, String Ensemble, Student Government (South House) and the Tennis Club.

Negroes have only one representative in the following activities: Executive Committee of the Sophomore Class, Future Teachers, North House Student Government, Orange (Out of 150 total membership), Radio Club and Stage Crew.

Organizations with other interesting proportions Negro, together with total enrollment include: Basketball (Varsity), 6 Negroes out of 14; Basketball (J.V.), 4 Negroes out of 12; Choir, 6 Negroes out of 62; Glee Club, 22 Negroes out of 136; Gymnastics, 3 out of 44; Intramural Gymnastics, 4 Negroes out of 32; Wrestling, 10 out of 39; Varsity Football, 15 out of 47; J.V. Football, 12 out of 31; Bowling, 3 or 4 out of 35-40.

These data suggest again the earlier observation that students participate where they come nearest getting an even break – and in the average high school that is in athletics. Even here, however, the participation is selective. Tennis, hockey, golf and swimming attract no Negro students.

College Placement

Another measure of the challenge of the high school is the placement of its Negro graduates in colleges and universities. There were 78 Negro students enrolled in last year's senior class (1968). Of this number, 27 were admitted to colleges and universities, 10 were admitted to institutes and special training programs, 29 left high school with the intention of going to work, three left school before they finished, three were undecided as to their plans, four planned to go into hospital training work, one additional did not graduate, and one is listed as having a health problem.

Considering the fact that there are few standards against which to measure the performance of the school with these seniors, one cannot say whether this is good or bad. However, if one considers the fact that many move away from the community and some drop out before they reach the senior class, one can easily sense the wide gap between these minority children and a large segment of their cohorts who have gone through school with them.

Undoubtedly, this inability of modern public education to intervene in the lives of these children and close the academic gap between them and their peers in their classes, makes for some of the problems of which the incident was but a symptom.

Much is said in the interviews concerning the lack of communication between the students and the staff. One of the important problems in a great complex organization, such as a modern high school, is how an administration can get feedback from the program so that it really has an understanding of what is going on. On the surface, it seems impossible that a faculty could have worked with this many students from September to March and not have been able to sense that something was awry. Only one person of the staff interviewed indicated that she had a tip-off as to some impending event. This was the social worker who works with some of the "so-called" problem girls. They told her jokingly that "they would take care of her" if any problems arose.

Feedback Failure

Many had commented that, by hind sight, they now realize that a lot of the youths were sullen, more withdrawn, and more sensitive. However, the feedback mechanisms did not bring the issues to the surface. The proposed course in Negro literature and history is most often cited, to illustrate the poor communication, as something which was in the works but which had never been communicated to the students.

With regard to this issue of communication, there are two points of view. The first is that the faculty was genuinely interested in what students thought and what they were concerned with. In this context, the teachers would want the students to be carried along but for some mysterious reason are unable to convey their interest to the students. The other is that staff members perceived themselves as specialists who knew what these particular minority children needed and were not concerned with trying to involve them in decision making — principally because they did not have confidence in their capacity to make decisions. In this latter instance, there was little intention to communicate with the students.

In all fairness to the staff, one suspects that the latter position is more nearly what existed prior to March, 1968. Before that date, these students who are the subject of this study were largely ignored. After this date, whatever else has happened, the school has come to understand that they are a part of the "school-community" and cannot be ignored. As a result, while formal mechanisms of communication have been established — which may be of some help, the real basis of communication — a recognition that these students are a force which cannot be overlooked, has provided a foundation for building understanding and communication if the school is of a disposition to take up the option.

No General Breakdown of Morale

An adequate analysis of the problems in this section of the report would require an evaluation which is far beyond the scope of this study. It is the hope that sufficient data have been presented here to indicate that the school does have its problems. The problems are not unique to it. There is little reason to suppose that the problems are any greater or less than in the above average high school of America. One could not say that staff and program are above criticism — none is.

If one asks himself, however, if this factor, or even this factor combined with the others which have been described, would have produced the disturbance in and of themselves, he would be forced to say, no, they would not. The school has been living with these conditions for a long time. The inability of the school to serve children of this type is traditional in America – yet it has not produced disturbances before. The traditional student response to such conditions has heretofore been apathy. If the school had faced a breakdown of morale stemming from poor leadership, it would also have been reflected in the white students. This did not seem to be the case.

We turn now to examine what we believe to have been the dynamic underlying this disturbance.

–VIII–

THE IDEOLOGICAL INFLUENCE

To this point, we have reviewed the factors within the situation which may have had a bearing on the student disturbance. In all of the factors examined, social class, discipline, newfound roles, and the high school milieu in which it occurred, we admitted that a trace of each could be found as forces operating within the situation. We found no single person in our interviews, however, who felt that these of themselves, and without the militancy revolution, would have produced the outburst.

We conclude then that the primary motivation was the new context in which the militancy revolution placed these youths. It should be remembered that one person who is close to the youths in their neighborhood and who is a member of the school staff said she had observed that they were no longer the carefree youths they had been before. They had been involved on their own, and almost unbeknownst to the faculty, in a study of Negro culture and history.

They even invited the social studies staff to a Freedom School being operated in the neighborhood. It was their way of saying that the social studies were not relevant to their needs or interest, and that the faculty was unwilling or incapable of meeting their needs in present courses.

In their "demands", they wanted Negro history and African culture, assembly programs dealing with their identity problems – and this for the entire student body (They wanted the other students to know and appreciate the issues which were bedeviling them), and "required" sensitivity training or human relations courses, for the entire staff. In other words, it seems they were pleading for a better understanding on the part of the entire high school community of the life and death issues with which they were grappling in the era of which they were a part.

Visible, Poor, Powerless

What were those issues?

The first is that, among the vast majority, they are the poor in a community of considerable affluence.

The second is that they are identifiable as to color. Hence, the alienation and the rejection can't be swept under the rug as in the case of the poor whites of the community. If there are no Negroes in the honors sections, for instance, it is visible. If a poor white youth is not in the honors section, he is not visible. Hence, while color may not be the cause of the problem, it does put a tracer on the problem to make sure it is not hidden or glossed over.

Third, they are powerless. All youths are compromised in power, somewhat, but the white youths have what might be called "ascribed power". That is, they have capacity to make their interests felt in the communal decision making because of who they are. If the Negro youths achieve power, it must be acquired through other means.

Heretofore, a Negro youth faced the alternative of either resigning in apathy – which a vast majority have done – or else coming into mainstream of community participation through a process which has been well defined. If he wanted to come into mainstream, he had to become involved and try to participate on the ground rules laid down by the dominant society. He had to believe in the mythology of the American Dream, which is that all will be rewarded according to their initiative and their ability. These aspirants, to become mainstream persons, then had to become alienated from their group, made ashamed of their heritage.

Every second generation of peoples who have come through this process has had to wrestle with the problem of "group self hate" among its youths, i.e., the idealization of the dominant group's values, and the depreciation of those of its own group. When these brightest youths were thus sufficiently sandpapered to the dimensions of the power arrangement of the society, they were transmuted into "ideal Americans".

When Negro youths have gone through this process they are referred to by the militants as having been "washed". They have been tuned out of mainstream identity with the group. They are listening to a different drummer. One such young, Negro middle class person was referred to recently as a "Black Anglo-Saxon".

"Black" – Symbol of Hope

Within these recent years a new wind has been blowing in the Negro community. It holds that for a person to be respected he must have power – capacity to make his interests felt in communal decision making. It contends that any person coming to a bargaining table to negotiate without power is a beggar. An oft repeated phrase among these new leaders is that power cannot be given; it has to be taken. One of the leaders in this school of thought coined the phrase "Black Power". This became the symbol of a reawakened sense of worth and pride in heritage among Negroes – and particularly Negro youth.

This particular disturbance was in many respects a public affirmation of identity with this movement and with its newfound pride of race and heritage. One has the feeling, as he reads how those on the outside tried to tell those Negroes on the inside that they had an obligation to come out and take a stand, that this was not unlike the early Christian movement. In that latter group, the cross, which was the symbol of defeat and despair, became elevated to the symbol of pride and hope. In this group, the symbol "black", which had been the symbol of degradation, discrimination and shame, now was being elevated into a symbol of pride and hope. The 200 on the lawn on March 26, 1968 did not want to fight, their frustrations were not over bad food, nor any particular discriminations. They were saying, "Look, we are here. We can no longer be ignored. We are no longer going to be ashamed and apologetic about being black. We have found our souls."

Said one of these youths: "The issue is not whether we get a little Negro history and African culture. The issue is can I and those like me be educated in a place like this without the education 'sucking' us up into the great middle class, and our leadership being lost to the group? Can we blacks be educated without having cultural genocide practiced on us?"

By this, we believe he means that before modern education can really serve him, he must go through this denigration, be made ashamed of his heritage, alienated from his group, the process to which we were referring before.

Identity Affirmation

Some staff doubt that this identity affirmation will make much difference. Said one: ". . . May I say that I object to the investigators' asking information for a study in a fashion suggesting that a hypothesis has been proven, namely: that the 'strike' somehow resulted in dramatic before-after demonstrations of ego strengths and weaknesses, identification and alienation problems unfolded and resolved, etc. Personality changes of this order are never drastically affected by a student boycott or any other demonstrations of non-personal nature. Personality changes are usually affected in very personal and caring kinds of encounters between people."

This same person, however, goes on to indicate that it has led to more responsible ways on the part of a number of black students. She further states that the boycott and the national influences leading to it "may have robbed black students of easy excuses to explain away academic and social problems". Whether the affirmation made much "before and after" difference, as referred to above, remains to be seen. There are some indications, as she admits, that it has made some difference. Many teachers have commented on the added involvement of Negro students this fall. Others have indicated that there are significant changes in many aspects of the school's program as a result.

One word needs to be said concerning the alternative to this "taking of power" and changed identification process. It is the bankruptcy of traditional programs of "service" to students of this type. The schools have served some well and have been able to get some caught up in these "integrative processes". These successes stand as testimonials to the ability of empathic teachers to help students make over their lives.

The issue which would be raised by the militants, however, is whether it is necessary and desirable to have such people alienated from their own groups and "washed". What happens to the others who are not so fortunate as to meet up with such wonderful teachers as role models? Must this movement of the group into mainstream be accompanied by the erosion of human resource which is reflected in achievement group levels in the White Plains High School?

Militancy Versus Apathy

If one need must choose, it seems to us he would choose militancy over apathy. We have demonstrated that we do not know how to deal with apathy. We might learn how to deal with militancy.

A further indication of this affirmation aspect of the demonstration is the type of demand made by the demonstrators. Their demands leave the appearance that the students had a hard time finding things on which to take issue. The course which they demanded was already in the planning stages. Most teachers felt the students knew about it. Others doubted if they did. The students in their interviews intimated that they knew about it, but that the administration had dragged its feet so long in doing anything about it that they despaired of any good intentions.

If one considered the seriousness of the demands, he would be compelled to say it was a tempest in a teapot. If the demonstration had been for this reason, it is doubtful that it would have come off.

Closely related to this line of thought is the timing of the demonstration. There had been many such disturbances throughout the country. The day preceeding the demonstration's start, the Woodlands High School in Greenburgh 8 School District had experienced a similar eruption. It had been much more destructive. Many persons interviewed, however, indicated that the students of the two schools fraternize in organizations and groups in the community, and some indicated that there was considerable pressure on the White Plains black students to make comparable witness as to their identity. In fact, in some of the junior high schools of White Plains there were rumors that the Woodlands youths were coming over to start something.

Doing Their Thing

We are led to conclude that these youths were under considerable pressure, both from within themselves and from the outside, "to do their thing", i.e., something which would be a public affirmation of their identity with this new breath or hope as the alternative to apathy, despair, alienation, and Negroes' being castigated as trouble makers.

What they did was in the tradition of protest in its better sense. They were not followers of Martin Luther King – in that they did not believe in non-violence, according to one who is close to them -- but they cast their demonstration in such a manner as to keep violence risks at a minimum.

A short digression should answer the question as to why John Fox, who is not Negro, was one of the leaders. This young man's parents are a mixed marriage between persons of Japanese and Caucasian ancestry. Scarcely a person who mentioned his name but in the second breath indicated this background. Fox was not ecomically deprived. It would appear that his anger was with the whole culture of a school as well as its community which may have made him feel outside the prevailing social order. Thus, he may have been led to identify with the powerless minority of blacks rather than to pay the price necessary to identify with the "establishment". The circumstance of his heritage gave him a vantage point denied to those youths who unquestioningly accept the dominant group's status symbols and avenues of upward mobility.

However, John's parents, when interviewed, felt that it would be erroneous to emphasize their son's "mixed parentage". They see as more relevant to John's actions the whole atmosphere of their home and the fact that they have made a conscious and continuous effort to teach John the importance of equality, a just social order and morality. Dr. and Mrs. Fox also felt that the black students valued John's link to the white student body.

Primary Motivation: Ideological

In conclusion of this aspect of the analysis, it should be pointed out that we hypothesized in the beginning that if the primary motivation were this ideological movement, one would expect to find: *1) the disturbance led by intellectually good students*. This turned out to be the case. They all three are in college this fall. *2) evidence of a considerable amount of discipline within the group*. This was true. They were able to hold the trouble makers from destruction of property. Only a few fist fights occurred and the leaders were instrumental in stopping these. *3) the leadership connected with outside community "ideologs"*. There is little doubt but that this is true. Once the disturbance started, they were listening to CAP and other sponsored speakers in a serious way. They were assisted in their negotiations by many persons from the community – persons sufficiently oriented as themselves that they could trust them. While we uncovered no evidence that adults helped plan the demonstrations, there is widespread belief that this was so. We doubt it. In the early part of the demonstration, time was spent parlaying over leadership. If it had been planned with outsiders this would not have occurred. *4) that the demands would be thought through*. The demands were not clear at the beginning. They seemed to have emerged as the dialogue went on. *5) that the techniques of disruption would be consciously planned*. This seemed to be the case. *6) that the participants would be intellectually good students, but would be marginal in the school's social sets*. This we were unable to establish. Some Negro students did not join in. In the junior high at Battle Hill where there are some middle class Negroes, there was no disturbance. The reason for this is not clear. Mrs. Cobb, who heads the new Human Relations Committee within the high school, expressed the belief that militancy, or cultural identity pervade all the groups within the Negro student body, but that the middle class Negro youths are less willing to step out and shake a finger in the face of the whites. They are more inhibited. Even these middle class Negro youths, she believes, are with Stokeley Carmichael in ideology but not in strategy. *7) that such an ideological motivation would be reflected in demands for self-segregated activities*. This we did not find. The minority youths wanted the entire student body exposed to Negro speakers and other programs; they wanted the entire faculty exposed to human relations education. *8) that the demonstration would be tied to a wider movement*. This was true in some respects. However, there was no indication that they were members of any "activitist" organization.

Probably Inevitable

We conclude this part of the report by reasserting our conviction that even if all the factors indicated in sections 4, 5, 6, and 7 had been ideal, White Plains High School would probably not have been spared the disturbance. In searching, in retrospect, for what might have been done, it is easy to do Monday morning quarterbacking and dig up all the limitations of the school system. This has its value. It should be done. We have spared no one in our analysis of these creaks and groans of the system as it has operated. It would be a mistake, however, to seek in one or all of these limitations a scapegoat which would detract from the basic issue of ideology.

That basic issue is fundamentally racial, secondarily social class. It is: *How do minority children in a status oriented, academically driven high school become educated without being made second class citizens on the one hand or else being "washed" and alienated from their group on the other?*

The White Plains episode limns the problem in clear detail. If a youth is of lower social class, there are ways through which he can elevate himself. He can learn responsible behavior as he emerges into responsible roles in the society. The school can shore up its perimeters of authority and can tighten up its administration or alter its curriculum – all of these can be dealt with rationally. What a youth cannot do anything about is “who he is”. This is the unfinished business of the total society. It is the business of secondary – indeed, all – education.

— IX —

HOW THE BOYCOTT WAS HANDLED

One reason for this investigation was to try to find what has been learned from the way it was handled. We turn now to this task. These factors stand out:

1) The way the situation was handled cannot be separated from an understanding of why it occurred.

If it had been a race riot as some thought, it would have been handled as a riot. Police should have been called in at the earliest possible moment. No temporization should have been done. It was not a riot, however.

If it had been unruly youths "running wild", the same formula would have applied. It would have been an indication of the breakdown of discipline, and a normlessness of conduct within the school community. It was not this kind of disturbance.

If it had been an organized effort of disruptive youths trying to disrupt the high school, using such tactics as the SDS (Students For A Democratic Society) used at Columbia, in which they took over the offices of the president of the university, the superintendent would have been remiss in not having them evicted at the earliest possible moment. Experience indicates that to delay in the name of being humane only exacerbates the situation and makes the authority look worse in the eyes of society the longer he delays.

This was not a disturbance of that sort. We believe the superintendent was justified in handling it as he did through negotiation and dialogue. To have handled it otherwise would have reinforced the stereotype concerning the use of power by the dominant group.

We also agree that had the disruption of Tuesday, April 2, persisted on Thursday, April 4, he would have been justified in using force to restore the situation — as he was apparently prepared to do. So long as he was dealing with issues of substance without violence, he could afford to negotiate. If it had emerged into violence and the use of force on the part of the protestors, then he would have had no recourse but to have restored order.

2) The Board of Education was to be congratulated for leaving the respon-

sibility for dealing with the disturbance in the hands of the responsible administrative official and his staff.

In the first place, this was an indication of their confidence in his leadership. In the second place, it kept the community from coming to perceive division within the ranks of the responsible people – division which undoubtedly would have occurred if the board had intervened, thus polarizing the community concerning differences of opinion on how the matter should be disposed of. In the third place, it left the handling of educational matters in the hands of educators. This was very important – especially if the matters to be negotiated were those of curriculum. In the fourth place, it allowed those who had relationships with the children to deal with them, rather than persons who were unfamiliar to them. And lastly, it conveyed a concern in a humane way within the community – a feeling that the protestors did count and that what they had to say was worth hearing – rather than making it seem that the power structure of the white society was coming down on these minority youths. (Remember, there is no Negro on the Board of Education.)

3) Concerning the channel of negotiation: Some felt that these demonstrations should have gone through student government channels to make their representation to the administration. This, they contend, would have been practice in good government. This would have been true if the student government had been a viable instrument of student life. It was not.

The elections, in some students' terms, had been popularity contests. Those elected had tended to be of the power arrangement of the community. This student activity was completely irrelevant to the issues with which these youths were dealing. One unsolved problem is how to make student government more vital. Some of the students think the disturbance moved the elections from these popularity contests to considerations of issues. Be that as it may, is this not the problem in the totality of the society? The major way through which power is redistributed in a democracy is through political process. However, when this fails, the alternative is to "take it to the streets". This is what happened in this arrangement. One point which these data stress is that of how to improve the student government process. We shall deal with this later.

4) How to deal with rumors. One of the issues raised is that of how to deal with rumors. In tense situations the wildest of rumors comes to be believed.

In one of the junior high schools, the major portion of the time of the administrator was spent in allaying rumors which teachers believed. In the high school, itself, the potentially serious troubles which were averted were those stemming from rumors about this group or the other. When information was available and students understood what was going on, a large number of whites were sympathetic to the cause which the Negro youths represented.

5) How to keep a situation fluid and open and prevent persons and groups from getting maneuvered into mortgaged positions too soon.

Some persons on the staff probably got themselves into positions which they would not now, in retrospect, take. Nevertheless, they are tagged with a position from which it is hard to extricate themselves. The most serious division within the community, perhaps, came from the belief of many that the administration was going to follow a hard line after its report to the board on the night of April 2, only to find that the next day, a time when school was not in session, a negotiated settlement had been reached.

This danger of a mortgaged position forebodes some problems concerning the future of the report on discipline, in our judgment. There is need for clear and unequivocal perimeters of authority in the school situation. However, a faculty committee developing such a document, without significant involvement of students and without any confidence that the community — especially its minorities — will understand and support it, can easily produce a formal, cumbersome document in which legalists will insist on a letter-of-the-law, strict interpretation in situations to which the instrument does not apply.

Discipline Problems Symptomatic

Discipline problems are usually symptoms of larger problems, rather than being causes in and of themselves. It is incumbent that discipline matters be seasoned with educational understanding in situations of this kind. Had this document on discipline existed prior to the disturbance and the superintendent been mortgaged to it, he would have been severely handicapped in dealing with the matter as well as he did.

Having said this, we intend no intimation that there should not be discipline. There has to be. There can be no double standard of conduct as between Negro and white youths. It is merely to say that a faculty clothing itself in its authority may have trouble in making its document a living part of the educational organism which is the school.

6) If the establishment got any message out of the disturbance, it certainly should include the fact that a different type of education is going to have to be forged for all youths — not just the minority.

During the past few years the goals of citizenship and those of scholarship have drifted toward incompatibility. The school with its pride in the percentage of its students it gets into "name" colleges, has tended to scuttle the needs and interests of those who did not fit this image. The bright, facile students were taught to be the Brahmins while the others were the untouchables. The white community pressured its children to seek social status and academic rank by shunning the encounter with children of lesser privilege. This unshared privilege has been corrupting. It shielded these youths of the whites from sharing community with the remainder of society. This was and is done in the school through segregated grouping activities in student organizations and through academic groupings within the classes.

These children of the "outside" are demanding that community be shared with them. The schools can either develop innovativeness to make this possible, or else face the certain future prospect that the militant Negro minority will demand local control of its schools, and seek to withdraw into apartheid education. If this happens, then each of us withdraws into a kind of tribalism and concentrates on the lore of his tribe – rather than upon a common set of values. If this happens, the concept of the "common school" as we have known it in America will have passed by default.

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INNOVATIONS RESULTING FROM THE INCIDENT

A number of steps were taken immediately at the high school to give evidence of administrative good faith and to rectify those deficiencies in the program which could be remedied in short order.

The student leaders had originally requested that they have some kind of meeting of all students to make their position clear. On April 10, it was decided that the social studies classes could meet in the auditorium for this purpose. Arthur Bruesewitz, social studies Department chairman; Mr. Woodard, Mr. Ivers, Mr. Binotto and the student leaders addressed these meetings. The leaders presented their case and answered questions posed by members of the social studies classes. The consensus of the administration was that the sessions were worthwhile.

Lunchtime and evening elective seminars were instituted with the assistance of John Harmon of the Westchester Chapter, Association for the Study of Negro Life and History. They were scheduled periodically throughout May and the beginning of June until examinations began. Attendance at these meetings varied, depending on the subject announced for the particular session and on the interest-value of the guest speakers or panelists who appeared.

Movies, presented by Ossie Davis under the auspices of the "History of the Negro People", sponsored by CBS, were used extensively in social studies classes.

A field trip was arranged so that students who wished to do so could go to Manhattan to see three plays (black theatre) in an off-Broadway playhouse.

Lee Greenbaum, a photographer-hobbyist in the county, came to the high school and gave a presentation on "Life in Africa" to the social studies classes. Such library and audio-visual materials as were on hand – and the collection was far from minimal – were more prominently displayed and were used, where feasible, to include some exposure to black history and culture in the curriculum for the remainder of the year.

Two major assemblies for all students were planned: an appearance by a prominent Negro television news analyst and a black theatre presentation on Negro history. The analyst's appearance, twice scheduled, had to be canceled both times by him because of late-breaking major national news developments.

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Language Problem

The black theatre assembly produced an unexpected community controversy. Instead of the scheduled program, the Haryou Drama Group producer apparently decided to substitute some original dramatic and musical sketches of his own. Some of the language used in these dialogues was of the street vernacular and shocking to many white students, and to their parents when they heard about it. The administration at the high school and at the central office received many parental complaints. Fortunately, the local newspaper did a good job of checking the facts, finding out how the substitution came about and explaining it. The paper also, drawing on a background press memorandum prepared by the school system's information office, explained the meaning of some of the vernacular expressions – not all of which were as "earthy" as the largely middle class white audience had assumed.

Discussion groups involving both black and white students were organized at East View and Highlands junior high schools to give students an opportunity to express their opinions about the junior high program and to provide a forum which would facilitate an understanding of the issues involved in the high school demonstrations.

At the districtwide level, plans went forward for intensive summer work by faculty task forces with a view to completing the K-12 social studies revision and drafting a K-12 Negro history and literature supplement keyed to the revised curriculum. (While this work had been planned anyway, the administration candidly says that, except for the high school demonstrations, it would not have proceeded with such urgency. Previous curriculum revisions of that magnitude had required two or more summers to complete.)

Not all actions stemming from the high school disorders were aimed at the black community, however. The subject of discipline continued to be a matter of both overt and tacit criticism within the white population segment. Accordingly, at the request of a member of the Board of Education, the topic was placed on one of the board's summer agendas and the superintendent presented an administration position paper on the subject. (See Appendix). After hearing a presentation, also, on the work of the faculty discipline committee (another project which had been well underway before the disturbances), the board subsequently adopted an official discipline policy recommended by the superintendent. (See Appendix).

At all the secondary schools that spring, teachers and administrators focused special efforts on the black sophomores and juniors who were emerging as future leaders of their group (Fox, Myers and Rogers were seniors and would not return the following fall). A number of intelligent, committed black students were identified and were encouraged to develop that commitment through constructive channels, such as a student advisory committee at Highlands Junior High School and the newly organized Human Relations and Joint Communications committees at the high school. These groups were composed of both black and white students and provided an outlet for Negro leadership talent which had not been provided by the traditional student government organizations of the secondary schools. (The regular student government leaders tended to resent or show other evidence of being "threatened" by the emergence of these new student policy-participation groups. This is a continuing problem on which the administration is now focusing).

Talent Search

The superintendent intensified his long standing efforts to encourage, indeed, insist upon, a "talent search" approach at the elementary level, so that promising Negro students may be early identified and gotten into such activities as band, orchestra, dramatics, art clubs, student newspaper and yearbook, and the like. Battle High Junior High School, because it is smaller than the other two junior highs and because of the interdisciplinary faculty teamwork in connection with the pilot Middle School project for grades six through eight there, appears to be making substantial progress in its talent search for and involvement of Negro youngsters in a variety of extra and co-curricular activities.

Black-White Faculty Dialogue

It is obvious too, that the high school disturbance opened up new channels of communication between white and Negro faculty members. White teachers and administrators have gained a deeper insight into the motivation and behavior of the black student group from their popular and respected Negro faculty peers. (This is not to say that a wide gap does not exist, but those white faculty members who have made conscientious efforts to understand have been able to seek and find assistance through their Negro associates.)

Another decisive course of action catalyzed by the student disturbances was that of human relations education for teachers. While this had been a recognized need for some time prior to the disturbances – indeed, ever since the districtwide school desegregation plan of September, 1964 – several positive approaches resulted from the incidents of student unrest.

With federal funds, White Plains became sponsoring agency for a five-city inservice education program in which some 200 teachers from the five cities will be enrolled in January of 1969. Participants will be paid stipends of $450. Funds were provided for substitutes this fall so that members of the Negro History and Literature Summer Task force can be free to act as consultants to other teachers in implementing the new social studies curriculum.

A special conference day for the entire elementary school faculty was also held in the fall of 1968, providing inservice work in social studies and math, including emphasis on ways to stimulate the poorly motivated child whose deficiency in math may be, in part, the product of a culturally deprived environment.

A districtwide faculty meeting was conducted in the fall of 1968 to introduce the entire faculty — as well as the social studies faculty — to the new K-12 social studies curriculum. The Rev. Charles Cobb, who is associated with church civil rights action programs at the national level, gave the keynote address on this occasion.

Report Cards Examined

The districtwide Curriculum Council in the fall of 1968 established a faculty task force on report cards and student records. One of its objectives will be to involve faculty in solving the problem of grade differentiation between groups of advantaged and disadvantaged children.

The districtwide guidance staff also had an intensive full-day workshop in the fall of 1968 in which special emphasis was placed on guidance for center city children. Consultants worked with the guidance staff on that occasion.

A most significant development at the high school in the fall of 1968 was the change in rank-in-class weighting for Honors, "S", "M" and "E" course levels. The former point system differentiation among these levels was abolished, except for a slight weighting for grades in Honors courses.

More Mobility

The primary objective of the change was to make the system more democratic. Under the existing system, with its very heavy weighting for academic classes taken by able youngsters, it was practically impossible for an "M" student, for example, to have a high rank in class. Secondly, it was hoped that with the removal of the great difference in weighting for academic and non-academic classes, able students would be encouraged to broaden their choice of electives to include the arts, industrial arts, home economics, and other non-weighted courses.

Procedures for moving from one level to another were also radically revised, the final decision to change one level up or down now being reserved to the student and his parent, subject only to review by the high school principal.

The Social Studies V (Afro-Asian history) elective was opened to "M" level students and Negro enrollment was encouraged. (There had been none the previous year.) Efforts now are being made to broaden the enrollment in the interdisciplinary Humanities elective, formerly the province of honors students.

The social studies chairman has established a student curriculum advisory group with which he is working closely. One of the innovations established as a result of the group's recommendations is a program of academically heterogeneous social studies discussion groups. These groups meet on a regular schedule and draw participants from all course levels.

In the elementary and junior high schools, efforts have been intensified to get and keep black parents on PTA executive boards. Many principals have stepped up their normal program of kaffee klatches in parent homes (which takes them to center city as well as to middle class white homes) and have encouraged similar programs by the PTA. School assemblies which focus on the African heritage are now being presented or planned by almost all of the schools, and there is evidence that the individual schools are earnestly seeking to involve more Negro pupils in student government and extracurricular projects.

—XI—

RECOMMENDATIONS

1) More effort to make the curriculum represent honest scholarship. The curriculum of the school is now organized around the mythologies of the dominant power group — primarily the WASP (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant) culture. As power relations change, the perspective of scholarship tends to become altered to meet new power arrangements. For instance, it is only in the recent past that Roman Catholic children could be comfortable in the average public school. The Protestant Reformation, for example, is taught as controversial material. (Here the teacher does not inculcate the dogmas of the dominant group, but seeks, instead, to help youths understand both sides of the controversy.) The change in curriculum has been forced on the schools by the changes in power relations between the groups.

Likewise with the Jews. For 75 years, this minority has been trying to get the schools — the principal means of cultural transmission — to rid themselves of content which is anti-semitic. It is only as they have come into the power stream of society that they have achieved any degree of success. Educators are still baffled over how to teach many aspects of culture — such as *Merchant of Venice* and *Ivanhoe.* Christmas is still a time of controversy in many schools.

In some respects, labor has faced a comparable situation. Labor organization was taught in a manner which threatened the integrity of children from this background. The stereotypes indoctrinated by the schools made children from such backgrounds ashamed of their heritage. Some of this still persists — low income occupations, however honest, still carry a stigma of second class citizenship. However, as labor has gained power, this condition has tended to be self-correcting.

Task Ahead

If this situation exists for these erstwhile minorities who are now in the power stream of society, what does it portend for the Negro group which is just now knocking on the door of the establishment? If the white is a racist society, as the Kerner Commission contends, and if the schools are the transmitters of culture — as they are supposed to be, then what is the task ahead for American Education as it seeks to move from chauvinistic, racist oriented assumptions and curriculum content to a program commensurate with the world in which all of America's children — white and black — must assume their obligations of citizenship?

This is more than a special course in Negro history and culture — though that may help. The task is the injection of honest scholarship into the eternal quest for understanding which engages youth in school pursuits. It is not indoctrination of the lore of this tribe or that among us — giving each a dose of identity — it is a higher synthesis which draws from the strengths of the heritage of all to bring us to a new set of common values and norms with which all can be comfortable, and by which none will feel compromised.

If the disturbance of these youths has any meaning of consequence, it is in this profound challenge to the public schools. Fortunately the demands are not for indoctrination of any particular group's ethos. All they require is honest scholarship.

2) More Negro staff. If such an approach as suggested above is made there will be need for the widest variety of viewpoints and identities in the quest. One cannot be sure that what he teaches has universal validity. He can only hope for the widest array of "others" against which to "bounce" his ideas and suggestions. We all have blind spots in our perceptive apparatus. Our confidence in any theories or ideas must seek reinforcement from those with different viewpoints. Consequently, there is need for a balance in the staff which leads youths in these quests. Eight Negro staff members out of 140 in the high school are not enough to accomplish this purpose. Particularly pressing is the need for a Negro guidance counselor. Minority group youths who must stand as peers among the children of the dominant society need support and strength — for theirs is the hardest task. There are no apologies for designating the race of such a staff person. In the long run, this should not be necessary. In the short run, it is.

A comparable recommendation is in order with regard to civil service staff, and to the food handling department. One of the most troublesome parts of the high school day from the standpoint of human relations is the lunch period. Then, youths should feel free and relaxed. By the same token, it is the time when release from tension often leads to bizzare behaviors. Unless the staff of the cafeteria represents the entirety of the community, the minority children are most tempted to take advantage of food handlers. In addition to staff representation from the minority, there is need for more supervision in this area of activity.

In like manner, the one black secretary in the entire civil service staff of the school system leaves a gap in the completeness with which the total community is represented in its most communal undertaking — the public school.

Revitalize Student Government

3) A new approach to student government. It is conceivable that had there been the right kind of student government, there would have been no disturbance. It is hard to imagine what that kind of student government it would be, for it in all likelihood does not exist at the present time. Because student government has been impotent, students see it as a sterile form they maintain and use primarily as a popularity contest. The reason it is this is that students are not called on to decide substantive issues. Since they have no responsible decisions to make, they tend to behave irresponsibly. Perhaps one major area of study and development would be the search for a new approach to this vital activity. If scholarship is not to be divorced from citizenship, as is now the tendency, these activities must loom larger on the school's agenda than at present.

4) Guard against becoming rigid and formal in dealing with school tensions. It is very difficult for administration to keep from tightening-up and becoming formal and rigid in the face of tension. The tendency is for the administrator to "play his cards close to his chest", administer by directive, and deal with students and staff through formal channels. Some have complained that this is already happening within the high school. This insecurity is quickly picked up by staff, and soon no one takes chances. People then tend to fall back upon traditional procedures and methods — things they think they can defend — and there emerges a traditional school program.

This has not happened yet. It should be guarded against at all costs. This is the time when permissiveness, experimentation and "chance taking" is called for. Instead of retreating into tradition this is the time to move to innovation. Otherwise, present problems will be exacerbated for the "new wine will not go in the old bottles". A traditional program would be a forfeit of this school's date with history.

5) More involvement of pupils and community in discipline. Today there is considered to be a double standard in discipline. There is a feeling that Negro youths can get away with things which would not be tolerated by white students. The reasons for this are two-fold. In the first place, the authority of the teachers and the administration is legitimated in the dominant power group — not in the minority. The norms are those of the dominant group. The staff, except for eight persons out of 140, is white. For the white parents it is the staff representing them *in loco parentis,* monitoring their children's conduct. For the minority, it comes more nearly to being an outside authority which has little legitimacy in the minority community ruling over "our" children. In this situation, the authority of the school is supportive among the white, and less supportive among the Negroes.

The second problem relating to discipline is that staff and administration are often afraid to challenge minority group behavior deviancy. When this happens, some teachers do not "have guts enough" — as one put it, to confront disruptive behavior of minorities. They either look the other way and ignore it or else refer it to higher authority. The higher authority tends often to be equivocal. (Here let it be said that there is a difference in humane consideration of deviant behavior and equivocation. An analysis of the disciplinary action growing out of the "Apple Throwing" incident indicates a model of humane consideration with, at the same time, firm and unequivocal action.)

If firm authority is to be established, the authority of the school leadership must find legitimation in the entirety of the school's community — its minorities, its students — as well as its power structure. This takes work and purposive involvement. It cannot be left to chance.

6) Re-examine grouping practice. There is great difference of opinion among educators about grouping. Parents whose children are educationally facile fear their progress will be impeded if there are broad ranges of ability grouping in classes their children attend. Teachers yearn for narrow ranges of ability in classes they teach, but scorn having to teach classes with concentrations of those of lower achievement. When assigned to such groups, they invariably feel themselves less favored than when assigned to fast groups.

Undoubtedly this grouping arrangement affects the child's image of himself and his self-esteem. There is thus instituted what is called the self-fulfilling prophecy. Because a teacher believes a child has less ability she behaves toward him with less expectancy. Because she behaves toward him as if he has less ability, he responds in line with her expectations and fulfills her prophecy of him. A recent book titled *Pygmalion In The Classroom*[1] indicates that children tend to achieve about in proportion to their teacher's expectations of them.

Individuality the Objective

Here we face another issue in education. If children were as much alike as the IBM cards could sort them, and a teacher were worth her salt, her job would be to make them as different as possible as rapidly as possible. That is what education is all about. Yet few teachers ever feel their group is homogeneous enough.

Black students who are also of low socio-economic backgrounds are a challenge to the grouping assumptions of education. Their visibility makes it impossible for school systems to hide the way they are "sorted" in the educational process and taught their "place" in the system.

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[1] Robert Rosenthal and Lenore Jacobson, *Pygmalion In the Classroom* (New York, Holt Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1968)

7) Continue your exceptional efforts to close the academic gap between the children of the poor and the children of the affluent. The school system has made wonderful strides in this direction at the early childhood level. It is making significant efforts in many other places which have not been mentioned. The future of our country both on the domestic front and in the underdeveloped countries depends upon our making education a dynamic instrument of change — a force which will bring the underdeveloped peoples both at home and abroad into full scale participation in a technological society "within one generation".

The Coleman report says when other factors are held constant, the public school makes little difference. There are intimations that this is not so in White Plains. Can the community carry forward what it has so dramatically started? Not every community with more than one-fourth of its families on incomes of under $5,000 can afford over $1,500 per child expenditure upon education. White Plains has the resource, the will, and the expertise to do this task if education is to do it. There can be no higher item on the community's agenda.

APPENDIX

Discipline Policy of the White Plains Public Schools

The ultimate objective of education in the schools of White Plains is effective citizenship. This is to be accomplished in such a way that pupils are equipped both to carry on the values of the society and to build on and modify them to bring about improvements in the societal structure. To realize this goal, the best possible learning environment must be provided for all who attend the schools. Effective discipline, which is one vital element in achieving this kind of environment, is the product of relevancy of program and mutual respect among students, parents and staff members.

Since each citizen in a democracy is expected to learn and practice the approved arts of self-discipline, the long-range goal of all discipline must be self-discipline. It begins with the earliest training in the home, and it extends into the school and community. Most young people achieve the desirable goals of self-discipline as a normal outgrowth of the training received in the home, the school and the community. However, there are those who have not achieved self-discipline and for whom special policies and procedures must be devised.

Clearly defined channels, through which students, parents and staff members may make their views known, shall be established and publicized. These avenues of communication shall be so structured that petitioners will receive a prompt hearing and so that a decision, with full explanation, will be rendered as speedily as practicable.

In addition, reasonable rules and regulations — developed and enforced by all members of the staff, teachers, administrators, and civil service staff — are necessary for the orderly operation of the school and for the ultimate development of self-discipline. Pupils who do not conduct themselves in accordance with the rules and regulations established and who thus hinder the normal progress of other pupils will be appropriately disciplined, including expulsion.

The rights of all students must be continually respected and protected, recognizing at the same time that the needs of offenders must be carefully scrutinized and the reasons for their actions established and constructively dealt with.
Adopted by the Board of Education on September 9, 1968.

Statement on Discipline
Carroll F. Johnson

Too often, I'm afraid, we tend to think of discipline in rather simplistic terms — as punishment, or as a command given by an adult to a young person.

But the highest level of discipline is self-discipline. And self-discipline — respect for the rights and dignity of the other fellow — is necessary to what we call our democratic way of life. I would say tonight that every disciplinary policy, every disciplinary procedure we employ in our schools in White Plains has, or should have, as its objective the development of character, the development of the truly rational, self-disciplined individual.

In essence, that is the broad philosophy of discipline around which our administrative policies are built. I'd like to say a few words about our policies and after that, I would ask Mr. Johnson to bring us up to date on the work of our joint administrator-teacher Committee on Discipline. This is the group which has been developing guidelines in order to assure consistency of discipline among the classrooms in each building, and from building to building within the school district.

Discipline, when it's working as it should, is not evident and does not become a general concern. But that is not to say that the importance of discipline can be minimized. For order and mutual respect are essential if education is to take place. No matter how well informed a teacher may be, his ability to impart information to students, his success or failure as a teacher, will depend on his ability to maintain order, cope with the behavior problems which inevitably arise, and create the kind of warm, comfortable atmosphere which is conducive to learning.

All teachers know this. It is nothing new. Behavior problems aren't new, either. But the *kinds* of disciplinary problems which arise *do* vary from time to time because the behavior of young people is very likely to reflect the social and economic pressures of the era in which they live.

Therefore, it is necessary to understand children – their fears, their aspirations, the condition of their lives – if we are to teach them to become self-disciplined individuals. You don't accomplish this by simply imposing rules and regulations and invoking sanctions – although rules and sanctions are necessary to orderly discipline. Justice is impartial and impersonal, but the *administration* of justice is a highly personal, highly individual process. We try to keep this always in mind in working with young people.

And because youngsters are responsive to and influenced by what's going on in the larger society around them, it is necessary for the schools periodically to review disciplinary policies and procedures in order to keep them relevant and effective.

We have been reviewing and revising our policies and procedures for more than a year now. Mr. Johnson will tell you about that later.

But first, let me say that while I am sorry that discipline has become such an issue, I am glad that parents and students are sufficiently interested to take a constructive approach to the subject. I believe the people of White Plains are genuinely concerned about their schools and about the standards those schools set and the values those schools impart.

One of our primary objectives is to establish clearly defined channels through which students and teachers and parents can make their views known. Channels through which they can commend or criticize any aspect of the educational program. We must establish such channels in each school building so that students who are involved in and committed to social issues can have an acceptable means of making their views known without disrupting the education of others. We would expect that such avenues of communication would be structured so that the student petitioners could receive a prompt hearing and obtain a decision, with a full explanation, in a reasonable period of time.

I am convinced that lack of effective two-way communication between student and faculty on campuses throughout the United States has in large measure led to the misunderstanding and frustration, which in turn has bred the disrespect and the abrasive behavior we have witnessed at colleges and high schools during the last year.

I am also convinced that enlightened professional leadership by teachers and administrators can channel the forces of social change into constructive paths. If we as professionals can find ways to help our students express themselves and accomplish their legitimate objectives, then we shall be in a sound position to insist upon orderly conduct and the use of democratic processes rather than revolutionary tactics.

To sum up our policy on discipline, I would say that: 1) We believe in fairness for all students – black and white, good or slow, boy or girl.

2) We believe that the parents of this community, both black and white, want and expect their sons and daughters to show respect for the school and for their teachers. Conversely, we believe parents understandably expect us to show respect for the dignity and individuality of every child who attends school here.

3) We want to work with young people as individuals, reason with them – TEACH them, if you will – enlist their *cooperation* in making our schools places where courtesy and consideration are the order of the day. We view this objective as the mutual responsibility of teachers and students, working together day by day.

4) But we do not and cannot rule out the use of adult authority when all other techniques have failed. We must do whatever is necessary to maintain reasonable standards of conduct and to protect the welfare of the student body and the faculty. We would rather *teach* a child than suspend him, but suspension, expulsion and other procedures are sometimes unavoidable as last resorts.

Similarly, we prefer to reason with student groups rather than confront them with uniformed police force. We were in close touch at all times last spring with the city administration, and I would hope and expect that we can continue to avoid in White Plains the kind of confrontation which has brought so much heartbreak, destruction and even loss of life to some other cities. But we are obligated to do whatever is required to maintain reasonable standards of behavior.

5) Finally, since teachers must administer discipline, we believe they should be intimately involved in devising the particular measures which will be used. That is what the Committee on Discipline has been doing. The Board and the superintendent expect that discipline shall be administered in a fair and just manner, without favoritism on the basis of color, or for any other reason. Teachers have a right to expect in turn, that the administration will support them in the application of just and reasonable disciplinary measures.

Certainly, our Board of Education has been outstanding in its support of the administration, giving us the flexibility to deal effectively with any situation. In contrast, chaos has resulted in some other communities where boards have hopelessly circumscribed administrative action by establishing rigid rules and regulations.

I would hope that Board, administration and teachers in White Plains will receive the support of the *entire* community in the maintenance of acceptable standards of behavior for all students.

– August 12, 1968